AQUINAS'S

Disputed Questions on Evil

A Critical Guide

Edited by
M. V. Dougherty

AQUINAS'S *DISPUTED QUESTIONS ON EVIL*

Thomas Aquinas's *Disputed Questions on Evil* is a careful and detailed analysis of the general topic of evil, including discussions on evil as privation, human free choice, the cause of moral evil, moral failure, and the so-called seven deadly sins. This collection of ten specially commissioned new essays, the first book-length English-language study of *Disputed Questions on Evil*, examines the most interesting and philosophically relevant aspects of Aquinas's work, highlighting what is distinctive about it and situating it in relation not only to Aquinas's other works but also to contemporary philosophical debates in metaphysics, ethics, and philosophy of action. The essays also explore the history of the work's interpretation. The volume will be of interest to researchers in a broad range of philosophical disciplines including medieval philosophy and history of philosophy, as well as to theologians.

M. V. DOUGHERTY is Professor of Philosophy at Ohio Dominican University. He is the author of *Moral Dilemmas in Medieval Thought: From Gratian to Aquinas* (Cambridge, 2011) and editor of *Pico della Mirandola: New Essays* (Cambridge, 2008).

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Contents

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Acknowledgments

Abbreviations

Series

PG	*Patrologia Graeca*
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*
CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*

Works

DCD	Augustine, *De civitate Dei*
DLA	Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*
DMM	Augustine, *De moribus Manichaeorum*
DMS	Proclus, *De malorum subsistentia*
DN	Pseudo-Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*
DNB	Augustine, *De natura boni*
DSS	Aquinas, *De substantiis separatis*
ENC	Augustine, *Enchiridion*
In BDT	Aquinas, *Expositio super librum Boethii De Trinitate*
In DA	Aquinas, *Sententia libri De anima*
In DDN	Aquinas, *Expositio super Dionysium De divinis nominibus*
In MR	Aquinas, *Sententia libri De memoria et reminiscentia*
In Meta	Aquinas, *Sententia super Metaphysicam*
In NE	Aquinas, *Sententia libri Ethicorum*
In Rom	Aquinas, *Lectura super Epistolam Pauli Apostoli ad Romanos*
In Sent	Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*
QDC	Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae De caritate*
QDM	Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae De malo*
QDP	Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae De potentia*
QDV	Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae De veritate*

QDVCom	Aquinas, *Quaestio disputata De virtutibus in communi*
QQ	Aquinas, *Quaestiones de quodlibet I-XII*
Resp. de 43 art.	Aquinas, *Responsio de 43 articulis*
Resp. de 36 art.	Aquinas, *Responsio de 36 articulis*
SCG	Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*
ST	Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*

Introduction

M. V. Dougherty

Thomas Aquinas's *Quaestiones disputatae De malo* (*QDM*) is a lengthy, mature work consisting of 16 questions that subdivide into 101 articles.[1] It has been characterized as "one notable exception" to the tendency of later medieval thinkers to avoid writing major works dedicated to the topic of evil.[2] The third longest of Aquinas's series of disputed questions, *QDM* is valuable and best known for containing the most extensive accounts of several fundamental philosophical issues in the whole of Aquinas's written corpus. Among them are a detailed analysis of evil as *priuatio*, a lengthy exposition of human free choice, a highly original discussion of the cause of moral evil, and a thorough presentation of the so-called seven deadly sins.

Recent years have seen an increased interest in Aquinas's *QDM*. The long-standing predisposition to view the *Summa theologiae* (*ST*) as his final word on matters in philosophy and theology has given way to a more refined view that not only takes into account the relationships among Aquinas's later works but also reflects a greater sensitivity to the occasions for which Aquinas composed his major writings. *QDM* is not a comprehensive work of theological synthesis in the manner of the *ST* or the *Summa contra Gentiles* (*SCG*), but, rather, is a careful and detailed analysis of select problems falling under the general topic of evil. Compared with articles in the *ST*, those in *QDM* are generally more expansive, exhibit a greater number of objections and replies, offer lengthier arguments, and engage philosophical authorities with greater scrutiny. Additionally, *QDM* offers many vivid examples of moral situations and moral transgressions.

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[1] The critical edition of the work is: Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae De malo, Opera omnia*, vol. XXIII (Rome: Commissio Leonina / Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1982), hereafter, *Editio Leonina*, XXIII.

[2] Bonnie Kent, "Evil in Later Medieval Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 45 (2007): 177–205, at 182.

Arguably, the work presents Aquinas's best and most detailed treatment of a variety of important philosophical issues.

Aquinas's *QDM* illustrates the vast range of issues that can be considered under the broad topic of evil. The work begins with a subtle analysis of the metaphysics of evil (q. 1), and afterwards turns to the nature of sin (q. 2) and its causes (q. 3). After a discussion of original sin (qq. 4–5), Aquinas's much-debated analysis of human free choice (q. 6) appears. Then Aquinas offers an extensive account of the lesser or pardonable moral failures known as venial sins (q. 7), followed by a detailed treatment of the seven capital vices, popularly known as the seven deadly sins (qq. 8–15). Completing the work is Aquinas's meticulous account of demons and their influence in the world (q. 16). There is substantive overlap, therefore, between what later medieval thinkers and what present-day philosophers would consider essential to the topic of evil: the issues of moral failure, habits, and the metaphysics of evil are certainly recognizable areas of inquiry in contemporary philosophy. Such overlap, however, should not occlude certain oppositions between medieval and contemporary outlooks. From one perspective, the medieval view may appear too broad in comparison, as contemporary philosophers are much less interested in demons and in theological doctrines such as original sin. Yet from another perspective, the medieval view can appear too narrow. Aquinas is surprisingly silent in *QDM* on what contemporary philosophers of religion designate as *the* problem of evil, namely, how a God possessing the traditional attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, and omnibenevolence could allow the great suffering that is manifest in the world.[3]

The origin of *QDM*

Identifying a precise date for the composition of *QDM* has been a matter of difficulty among commentators, despite the general agreement that the work is one of Aquinas's later compositions.[4] As a work in the genre of *quaestiones disputatae*, *QDM* had its origins in disputations, only to

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[3] Brian Davies observes, "Readers largely unfamiliar with Aquinas's writings might expect his *De Malo* (On Evil) to amount to a sustained essay on God and evil. But it does not." See *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 135, n. 21. Davies also contends, "In a serious sense, however, Aquinas has *nothing* to say on this topic" and "what now passes as the problem of evil goes unmentioned in Aquinas's writings" (6).

[4] See Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, rev. ed. (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 201–207; Brian Davies, "Dating the *De malo*," in Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil*, trans. Richard Regan, ed. Brian Davies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 12–14; and "Authenticité et date," in *Editio Leonina*, XXIII, 3*–5*.

be edited and published in final form sometime later.[5] Interpreters commonly distinguish three stages in the composition of *QDM*: the original disputations, a later redaction or correction, and subsequent publication. Precision in dating the first stage for *QDM* is difficult; some propose Aquinas may have held the disputations in Italy at the Dominican *studium* in Rome at Santa Sabina,[6] whereas others suggest that they originated later in Aquinas's university activity in Paris.[7] In dating the later redaction or correction of *QDM*, commentators have pointed out that Aquinas's citation of recently available sources demonstrate that q. 1 must have been edited after March 1266, and that q. 16, a. 12 must have been edited after November 1267.[8] It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the final text of *QDM* was established by Aquinas no earlier than the end of 1267. However, if one adopts the view that the edited version of q. 6 on free choice presupposed the intellectual climate of the condemnations by the Parisian bishop, Stephen Tempier, on December 6, 1270, then the date of the second stage must be moved up to around that time.[9]

Despite the unresolved issues concerning the first two stages, interpreters now generally agree about the dating of the final publication of *QDM*. All surviving manuscripts of *QDM* originate in a single university exemplar that was contemporaneous with Aquinas. This Parisian manuscript consisted of 28 *peciae*, which were rented out for copying at the university and formed the basis of all extant manuscripts of the work.[10] The consensus is that *QDM* was published around 1270–1272 during Aquinas's second regency in Paris, with qq. 1–15 (23 *peciae*) published around 1270, and q. 16 appended by Aquinas around 1272 (28 *peciae* total). This publication date of around 1270–1272 for the complete set of sixteen questions suggests, however, that Aquinas was working on *QDM* around the

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[5] Bernardo C. Bazán defines the disputed question as "a regular form of teaching, of apprenticeship, and of research, presided over by a master, characterized by a dialectical method, which consists in bringing forth and examining arguments from reason and from authority which are provided by the participants which conflict on a theoretical or practical problem, and where the master must reach a doctrinal solution by an act of determination which confirms him in his function as master" in "Les questions disputées, principalement dans les facultés de théologie," in *Les questions disputées et les questions quodlibétiques dans les facultés de théologie, de droit et de médecine*, by Bernardo C. Bazán *et al.* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), 15–149, at 40.

[6] For a discussion, see M. Michèle Mulchahey, *"First the Bow Is Bent in Study…" Dominican Education before 1350* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1998), 294–296.

[7] Torrell favors the view that all of *QDM* was disputed during Aquinas's second teaching period in Paris; see *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 204, and more recently, "Life and Works," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 15–32, at 26.

[8] See "Authenticité et date," 4*; Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 202.

[9] See "Authenticité et date," 4*; Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 202.

[10] See Pierre-Marie Gils, "Étude critique de la tradition," in *Editio Leonina*, XXIII, 21*–68*.

same time as the *Secunda pars* of the *ST*, a work that overlaps in ways with matters treated in *QDM*. The Leonine Commission editors of the critical edition of *QDM* have proposed that "A somewhat simultaneous composition of these two works would explain rather well both the disputed question and the *Summa*, which seems to give the final position of Saint Thomas's thought."[11] In light of the general contemporaneity of both works, each should be consulted when assessing Aquinas's mature thought on themes common to both, especially since the treatments in *QDM* tend to be lengthier than their counterparts in the *ST*.

The unity and diffusion of *QDM*

To be sure, the great variety of issues falling under the general topic of evil selected for analysis by Aquinas in *QDM* might tempt some readers to question the very unity of the work. To allay such long-standing concerns, one might consider that the Leonine editors have emphasized the historical unity of the sixteen questions in the manuscript tradition. Although, as mentioned above, qq. 1–15 circulated first, it is known from the earliest extant taxation list of exemplars that q. 16 formed part of the original 28 *peciae*. This evidence has led the editors to conclude that "from the critical point of view it [q. 16] makes up an integral part of the total work, with no evidence of discontinuity."[12] The manuscript history of *QDM* is also relevant for assessing the status of the well-known q. 6 on free choice. Apart from potential concerns regarding the fittingness of its subject matter for the topic of evil, as well as potential concerns about its location in the order of the work, one might pause over its placement in *QDM* as a whole, because it alone of all of the questions does not subdivide into articles. On the basis of the manuscript tradition, however, the Leonine editors have insisted that q. 6 "occupies its logical place there from the beginning."[13] Still, not all commentators have been persuaded.[14]

While the influence of Aquinas's *QDM* is not comparable to that of the *ST*, particularly as the latter replaced Peter Lombard's *Sententiae* as the

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[11] "Authenticité et date," 5*; cited in Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 202.

[12] "Summary," in *Editio Leonina*, XXIII, 71*–72*, at 71*.

[13] "Summary," in *Editio Leonina*, XXIII, 71*–72*, at 71*.

[14] An unusual hypothesis has been advanced by Kevin J. Flannery, who suggests that q. 6 was an earlier version of *QDV*, q. 24, a. 1. Flannery suggests, "Perhaps q. 6, 'found in a drawer,' was inserted into *De malo* in order to provide what was thought to be lacking in a work on evil: to wit, a treatment of the role of *voluntas*," in "The Dating of *De Malo* Q. 6," which is Appendix C of *Acts Amid Precepts: The Aristotelian Logical Structure of Thomas Aquinas's Moral Theory* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 247–249, at 249.

standard theological textbook of the later medieval period and beyond, it would not be fair to say that *QDM* has been neglected. A total of eighty-three extant manuscripts of *QDM* have been identified,[15] and a recent catalogue identifies thirty-seven printed editions of the Latin text of *QDM* published between the 1470s and 2009, including the various *opera omnia* editions of Aquinas's works through the ages.[16] A major impetus for the renewed attention to the work was the 1982 appearance of the critical edition of *QDM* by the Leonine Commission, the institute inaugurated by Pope Leo XIII in 1880 to produce an authoritative series featuring of all of Aquinas's texts.[17] Additionally, translations of *QDM* in the major Western languages have appeared in the last twenty-five years or so,[18] including two complete English translations.[19] Recently, some translations of select questions with detailed commentary have appeared.[20] Unsurprisingly, the wider availability of the work has generated increased interest from those working from theological as well as philosophical standpoints.

The approach of this volume

This collection of essays examines the most interesting and philosophically relevant aspects of *QDM* without attempting a complete or systematic coverage of the work. The chapters exhibit how *QDM* makes a unique

[15] "La tradition du texte," in *Editio Leonina*, XXIII, 6*–19*, at 6*–15*.

[16] Rolf Schönberger *et al.* (ed.), *Repertorium edierter Texte des Mittelalters aus dem Bereich der Philosophie und angrenzender Gebiete*, 3 vols., 2nd ed. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2011), III: 3732–3734. Of these editions, twenty-six are described at length in "La tradition du texte," 15*–19*.

[17] An online version of the Leonine edition of *QDM* (see note 1 above) is hosted by the Bibliothèque nationale de France: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9485j.r=.langEN.swf.

[18] See Thomas Aquinas, *Vom Übel / De malo*, ed. and trans. Stefan Schick and Christian Schäfer, 2 vols. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2009–2010); *Quaestiones disputatae De malo / Untersuchungen über das Böse*, trans. Claudia Barthold and Peter Barthold (Mühlheim an der Mosel: Carthusianus Verlag, 2009); *Cuestiones disputadas sobre el mal*, trans. Ezequiel Téllez Maqueo (Pamplona: EUNSA / Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1997); *Il male*, trans. Fernando Fiorentino (Milan: Rusconi, 1999); *Questions disputées sur le mal / De malo*, trans. les moines de Fontgombault, 2 vols. (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1992).

[19] The first complete English translation of *QDM* to be published was *On Evil*, trans. Jean Oesterle (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995). The second translation appeared in a bilingual edition containing the Latin Leonine text, minus the apparatus, as *The 'De Malo' of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Richard Regan, ed. Brian Davies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). A slightly revised, English-only version of the second translation was later published as *On Evil*, trans. Richard Regan, ed. Brian Davies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[20] A bilingual edition with commentary of *QDM*, q. 1, is Martin Kuolt, *Thomas d'Aquin: 'Du mal.' Question 1: Le mal in général. Introduction et commentaire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009). Select articles of *QDM* in German translation with commentary are found in Christian Schäfer, *Thomas von Aquins gründlichere Behandlung der Übel: eine Auswahlinterpretation der Schrift 'De malo'* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013).

contribution to the Thomistic corpus by highlighting what is distinctive about the work and by situating Aquinas's analyses in relation to discussions found in Aquinas's other writings. Additionally, these contributions summarize the relevant history of interpreting the work and enter into ongoing debates among present-day philosophical interpreters.

The first contribution to this volume, by John F. Wippel, examines the major metaphysical themes that appear in the first question of *QDM*, which sets forth the metaphysical foundations of Aquinas's account of evil that is presupposed in the questions that follow. On some interpretations, *QDM* as a whole derives its name from this first question. The chapter begins by noting that Aquinas's awareness of the problem of evil is evident from a well-known objection in the *ST* that precedes the Five Ways for the existence of God. While Aquinas does not appear to treat the problem of evil in *QDM*, in the *ST* he considers the objection that if God existed, there would be no evil. According to Wippel, Aquinas's philosophical argumentation to show that God is good is highly significant for his overall analysis of the metaphysics of evil. The first question of *QDM* contains Aquinas's most detailed defense of the view that evil is not something positive but is a privation; that is, it is the absence of what ought to be present in a particular thing. Wippel shows that for Aquinas, evil is neither a thing nor an entity, nor does it possess an essence or nature in itself; rather, it is a special kind of negation involving the absence of the being (and goodness) of what is proper to a given subject. With these precisions, Aquinas is committed to the existence of evil in a qualified way: moral and physical evils are undoubtedly real. Aquinas's philosophical account in *QDM* of the origin of these moral evils has received much attention by scholars, and Wippel examines the history and debate surrounding the assertion by Jacques Maritain that Aquinas's analysis is one of his most original philosophical discoveries. The chapter concludes with the observation that Aquinas's treatment of particularly horrendous physical evils (such as devastating earthquakes that take many human lives) rests ultimately in part on theological considerations. On this view, a fully satisfying account of the problem of evil appears beyond the limits of philosophy.

In their contribution to this volume, Bonnie Kent and Ashley Dressel consider Aquinas's presentation of sins of weakness and sins from *malitia* (or, as generally translated, sins from malice). Aquinas's analyses of moral failure in *QDM* are indebted to a variety of traditions that preceded him, and part of this inheritance is an assortment of frameworks for classifying sins. Kent and Dressel argue that commentators have tended to overstate the Aristotelian features of Aquinas's account of both kinds of sins. A close

inspection of *QDM* shows that Aquinas departs from Aristotle's positions in key respects. Aquinas holds, for instance, that virtue does not inoculate a person from temptation, so that even a virtuous person can sin from weakness. Furthermore, on Aquinas's view it is possible for someone to choose a morally bad act while recognizing it as such, as is the case in acts of willful wrongdoing that Aquinas designates as sins from *malitia*. The chapter analyzes Aquinas's psychology of sins of weakness and sins from *malitia*, noting the divergences from Aristotle's views that mark the presentation in *QDM*. The chapter also addresses an interpretive puzzle that faces readers of *QDM*. Aquinas appears to offer two conflicting and seemingly incompatible accounts of sins of *malitia*: one that is Aristotelian, and another that assumes several essentially Christian tenets.

Tobias Hoffmann and Peter Furlong contribute a chapter that considers Aquinas's account of human free choice in *QDM*. Of the sixteen questions of the work, the one on human free choice (q. 6) is arguably the best known. It has been a key text in a long-standing debate concerning Aquinas's view of the precise relationship between intellect and will in human agency. This relationship is often considered in controversies over whether Aquinas should be viewed as a proponent of intellectualism or voluntarism in his moral psychology.[21] Many scholars have asked whether according to Aquinas the intellect or the will has primacy in human free choice. In the last century, Odon Lottin had proposed a developmental account by arguing that Aquinas's earlier writings favor the view that the will follows the intellect, and that in later works (including *QDM*, q. 6) a greater emphasis is given to the will.[22] Lottin revised his evolutionary approach several times, and his works spawned much discussion.[23] In their chapter, Hoffmann and Furlong begin their analysis of q. 6 by considering what is required for moral responsibility, and they conclude that the necessary condition for freedom is possessing perfect sourcehood, that is, voluntariness in the perfect sense. In their terminology, agents enjoy perfect sourcehood if and only if they are the source of their actions, they have alternate possibilities, and they control which alternative is actualized.

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[21] For cautionary remarks on invoking these categories to assess Aquinas, see Tobias Hoffmann, "Intellectualism and Voluntarism," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Robert Pasnau with Christina Van Dyke, rev. ed., vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 414–427.

[22] The first work by Lottin on this issue was "La date de la Question Disputée 'De malo' de saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 24 (1928): 373–388, slightly revised in his *Psychologie et morale aux XIIᵉ et XIIIᵉ siècles*, vol. 6 (Gembloux: Ducolot, 1960), 353–372.

[23] For brief overviews of the debate that followed, see Flannery, *Acts Amid Precepts*, 111–116, and P. S. Eardley, "Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome on the Will," *The Review of Metaphysics* 56 (2003): 835–862, at 836–839.

Hoffmann and Furlong then show how Aquinas's presentation of the relationship of intellect and will in acts of free choice accounts for the fulfillment of these conditions. After arguing that Aquinas's position on free choice is incompatible with determinism, they contend that Aquinas's remarks concerning the fall of the angels in *QDM*, q. 16 validate their conclusion that Aquinas endorses an incompatibilist theory of free choice.

In his chapter, Steven J. Jensen addresses a long-standing problem that interpreters have found in Aquinas's treatment of venial sins. Question 7 of *QDM* carefully considers the status of these lesser moral failures. The distinction between venial sin (*peccatum veniale*) and mortal sin (*peccatum mortale*) was firmly anchored in earlier ethical thought, as Peter Lombard had endorsed it in his *Sententiae*, thereby making it a matter of reflection for later medieval theorists on ethics.[24] Aquinas uses the distinction to explore degrees of gravity of moral failure, and in *QDM* he is generous with examples of wrongful actions falling under the two categories. Among venial sins Aquinas counts excessive eating and drinking, speaking an idle word, lying in jest, and lying to please or help someone; among mortal sins Aquinas counts homicide, adultery, blasphemy, devil worship, and theft.[25] Corporeal analogies assist Aquinas in setting forth the degrees of gravity of moral failures: venial sins are like curable diseases or food that is not easily digestible, and mortal sins are like incurable diseases or poisonous food.[26] Jensen observes that some commentators have accused Aquinas of a significant inconsistency concerning venial sin: on the one hand Aquinas maintains that every human action is ordered to an ultimate end, yet on the other hand he maintains that venial sin neither places a creature as its end (as is the case with mortal sin) nor places God as its end (as is the case with a good action). Does a venial sin have an ultimate end? One might wonder how sinning venially is possible, given these restrictions. Appealing to several neglected distinctions in Aquinas's writings, Jensen provides a solution and indicates problems with contemporary analyses of Aquinas's division of types of moral failure. In the course of his argument, he critiques appropriations of Aquinas's thought by contemporary philosophers, including proponents of the new natural law theory.

Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung contributes a chapter that begins with a summation of the far-ranging tradition of the seven deadly sins or seven capital vices (*uitia capitalia*) that Aquinas inherited, a tradition spanning a millennium with origins in the Christian monastic communities of the

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[24] Lombard, *Sententiae*, II, d. 42, c. 3.   [25] Aquinas, *QDM*, q. 7, a. 1, c.
[26] Aquinas, *QDM*, q. 7, a. 1, c.

fourth century. By adopting this scheme as a major framework for analyzing the moral life, Aquinas participates in a venerable tradition, and much of his analysis in *QDM* is heavily indebted to his predecessors. DeYoung provides a detailed and historically sensitive account of Aquinas's analysis of the capital vice of vainglory (*inanis* or *uana gloria*), highlighting along the way Augustine as an important forerunner to Aquinas's reflections. Aquinas offers a surprising level of detail in his account of vainglory in *QDM*, as he distinguishes carefully between vainglory and pride, argues that one can be vainglorious even when others are not present, and develops a sophisticated taxonomy of the many ways glory can be directed toward unfitting ends. Nevertheless, Aquinas ascribes to glory an important and necessary social function when glory is properly understood. The chapter demonstrates how Aquinas's presentation appropriates both Aristotelian and Augustinian elements in a novel way, revealing that Aquinas's invocation of the seven capital vices is not simply a deference to tradition.

Thomas M. Osborne, Jr.'s contribution to this volume offers an instructive example of how seemingly conflicting claims found elsewhere in Aquinas's writings can be successfully resolved by examining the more expansive discussions in *QDM*. Osborne considers a central issue of Aquinas's action theory that is treated both in *QDM*, q. 2, and in *ST* I-II, q. 18–20, texts that were written at approximately the same time. In the *ST*, Aquinas appears to make contradictory statements concerning whether moral goodness principally comes from an act's object or whether the moral goodness principally comes from the act's end. Furthermore, Aquinas contends in the *ST* that the exterior act is both an object and an end of the interior act. It is not obviously clear from the context of the *ST* how the exterior act can be both, if the object and the end are really distinct. Interpreting these passages has been difficult for generations of Thomistic commentators, some of whom have concluded that certain passages are irreconcilable. Osborne argues that *QDM* and *ST* offer consistent accounts, but this consistency is only clear when the texts of *ST* are read in light of *QDM*. In *QDM*, Aquinas successfully absorbs the terminology and major theses of his contemporaries to provide a more consistent approach than is evident in *ST* and in *In Sent*. These precisions allow Aquinas to offer a successful analysis of complex moral acts, such as when an agent commits adultery in order to steal, or gives alms under further considerations such as penance or vainglory.

In their chapter, Carl N. Still and Darren E. Dahl consider how Aquinas appropriates the Augustinian–Dionysian account of evil as a

privation within his analysis of human moral failure in *QDM*. At first glance, the notion of privation seems more applicable to physical evils, such as blindness or physical deformities, than to moral evils that originate in the will. Moral acts – even evil ones – appear to have a positive dimension, insofar as they are expressions of the will. In *QDM*, Aquinas faces the challenge of providing a description of moral evil in a way that preserves the metaphysical account of evil as privation but still does justice to the positive element of human acts. In opposition to those who would find inconsistency or incommensurability in Aquinas's presentation, Still and Dahl argue that Aquinas provides a unified account, one that is particularly dependent upon Aristotelian concepts of human agency.

In her contribution to this volume, Therese Scarpelli Cory uses Aquinas's inquiry into whether demons can cognize human thoughts as a springboard for examining what she calls "the mind-reading question," namely, whether a person who directly observed the inner workings of another's mind would be able to see what the other is thinking about. Recent years have seen a growing interest in the medieval views of angels and demons from a strictly philosophical point of view.[27] In reflecting on the existence and characteristics of immaterial creatures, medieval theorists developed and significantly expanded many philosophical doctrines in metaphysics, psychology, and cognition. In her analysis of the mind-reading question, Cory notes that the issue overlaps in significant ways with contemporary discussions in cognitive science about reading minds through neuro-imaging techniques. Aquinas answers the mind-reading question in the negative, and his analysis reveals that he has a more sophisticated account of intentionality than is generally acknowledged. In particular, Aquinas's concept of intentionality is broader than static mental representation, as Aquinas is shown to be aware of the mental phenomenon of attentiveness.

In the penultimate chapter of this collection, Fran O'Rourke engages the lengthy history of reflections on evil as a privation of the good (*priuatio boni*). O'Rourke unravels the earlier Neoplatonic contributions that formed this complex tradition, one where the writings of Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius were conduits of a host of earlier, unnamed sources. A full analysis of Aquinas's appropriation of evil as *priuatio* in *QDM* requires an identification of his explicit as well as hidden sources, and

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[27] Two recent collections of new philosophical essays on the topic are *A Companion to Angels in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Tobias Hoffmann (Leiden: Brill, 2012), and *Angels in Medieval Philosophical Inquiry: Their Function and Significance*, ed. Isabel Iribarren and Martin Lenz (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

O'Rourke chronicles this history.[28] Aquinas was unaware that much of what he found in Pseudo-Dionysius had been appropriated from Proclus, who had theorized extensively about evil in his treatise *De malorum subsistentia*, a work written in refutation of Plotinus's account of evil in the *Enneads*. Plotinus himself absorbed various Platonic as well as Aristotelian positions in his account of evil. O'Rourke also notes that Aquinas complements Augustine's presentation of evil as the absence of good by adding a crucial clarification, thereby overcoming an imprecision that limits the Augustinian account: evil is not the absence of good as such, but rather the absence of a due good.

In the last chapter of this volume, I consider Aquinas's analysis of some rather unusual examples of moral situations featuring the capital vices of gluttony (*gula*) and lust (*luxuria*), investigating to what extent there is overlap with present-day concerns among philosophers regarding the problem of moral luck. Questions 14 and 15 of *QDM* respectively examine the capital vices of gluttony and lust, but commentators have been divided about Aquinas's commitment to the inherited framework of the seven capital vices, despite the dominance of the septenary in one-half of the questions of the work. Aquinas's relatively brief and traditional remarks in qq. 14–15 can be viewed, however, in a much larger context, as many detailed analyses of acts of gluttony and lust appear throughout many of the preceding articles. These earlier discussions – often featuring unusual examples – serve an important function as they illustrate key points of Aquinas's moral theory. Aquinas's analyses are shown to have some overlap with contemporary discussions in philosophy concerning the role of accidental factors in the moral life.

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[28] For the later Neoplatonic tradition on evil engaged by Aquinas, see, for instance, Martin Kuolt, *Thomas d'Aquin*, 145–152; and Carlos Steel, "Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas on Evil," in *Avicenna and His Heritage*, ed. Jules Janssens and Daniel De Smet (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 171–196.

Metaphysical themes in De malo, *1*

John F. Wippel

Thomas Aquinas was well aware of what is often referred to as the problem of evil. An excellent indication of this is given in one of two objections he raises against accepting the existence of God as he begins to argue philosophically for this conclusion in his well-known Five Ways in his *ST* I, q. 2, a. 3. As he poses the objection, it seems that God does not exist; for if one of two contraries were infinite, then the other would be completely destroyed. But included in our understanding of the word "God" is the claim that he is a certain infinite good. Therefore, if God existed, there would be no evil. But evil is present in the world. Therefore God does not exist.[1]

Thomas's response consists largely of a quotation from St. Augustine's *Enchiridion (ENC)*, c. 11: "God, since he is supremely good, would in no way permit anything of evil to exist in his works unless he were so omnipotent and so good that he could make good also from evil."[2] Thomas then simply adds this comment to Augustine's text: "Therefore it pertains to the infinite goodness of God that he permit evils and draw good from them."[3]

From Thomas's presentation and response to this objection against the existence of God, we may draw out some implications. First of all, he recognizes that the existence of evil may be raised as an objection against the existence of God and so, just as he is about to present five arguments for God's existence based on natural reason rather than on religious belief, he finds himself constrained to consider this objection. Second, in Augustine's response, which Thomas evidently accepts, we find explicit

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[1] *ST* I, q. 2, a. 3, arg. 1 (*Editio Leonina*, IV: 31).

[2] As quoted by Thomas: "Deus, cum sit summe bonus, nullo modo sineret aliquid mali esse in operibus suis, nisi esset adeo omnipotens et bonus, ut bene faceret et[iam] de malo" (*Editio Leonina*, IV: 32). For Augustine, see PL 40: 236 (Cf. CCSL 46: 53). Note that Augustine's text reads 'et' instead of 'etiam' as in Thomas's citation.

[3] "Hoc ergo ad infinitam Dei bonitatem pertinet, ut esse permittat mala, et ex eis eliciat bona."

reference to God as being so omnipotent and infinite that he can draw good out of evil. And there Thomas explicitly refers to the infinite goodness of God. Third, here, as in many of his discussions of the problem of evil, Thomas cites Augustine. Again, in citing God's infinite goodness in his addition to Augustine's text, and in quoting with approval Augustine's reference to divine omnipotence, he underscores the importance of each of these divine attributes – goodness and omnipotence – for any full discussion of the problem of evil. Finally, in each of these statements he cites what he refers to in other contexts, including *ST* I, as preambles of faith, that is to say, truths concerning God or even concerning creatures that can be demonstrated philosophically, that is to say, by unaided human reason, even though they are also logically implied by articles of faith.

This last-mentioned point tells us that in considering Aquinas's treatment of evil, we are dealing with not only an issue that is of great concern to his philosophical understanding of God and of the way creatures stand in relation to him, but also of considerable interest to his religious belief and hence to his theology. In the present study, however, I propose to concentrate on what Aquinas's metaphysical thought can tell us about this issue.

Metaphysical presuppositions

To begin, it will be helpful to recall a few of the metaphysical presuppositions Thomas brings to his discussion of this issue. If one accepts a relatively late date for his *QDM* (c. 1270/1271 for the first fifteen questions[4]), as I myself do, it follows that Thomas will have already completed his treatments of these issues in *SCG* I and in *ST* I. First and foremost, of course, there is his conviction that God exists and that this is a truth that can be and in fact has been demonstrated philosophically. Indeed, whenever he explicitly refers to and begins to list preambles of faith, he always begins with the existence of God, and next cites his oneness, that is, the fact that he is one.[5] Then there is the question of God's goodness, and the

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4 See Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas,* vol. 1, rev. ed. (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 336, 428.

5 For an excellent example of this, see his *In BDT*, q. 2, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, L: 99, ll. 149–154): "primo ad demonstrandum ea que sunt preambula fidei, que necesse est in fide scire, ut ea que naturalibus de Deo probantur, ut Deum esse, Deum esse unum, et alia huiusmodi uel de Deo uel de creaturis in philosophia probata, que fides supponit." For discussion of this text and of others in Aquinas's corpus, see my "Thomas Aquinas on Philosophy and the Preambles of Faith," in *The Science of Being as Being: Metaphysical Investigations*, ed. Gregory T. Doolan (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 196–220, especially 196–199.

infinity of that goodness, and also of God's omnipotence as mentioned by Augustine. Finally, also underlying Thomas's entire discussion is his conviction, once again demonstrated philosophically, that as the uncaused cause of everything other than himself, God is also the creative and conserving cause of every created being and the first concurring or moving cause of the actions performed by created agents including those that act necessarily (natural agents) and those that act freely.[6]

While limitations of space will not permit me to take up Thomas's demonstration of each of these points, I would like to begin by recalling briefly some of his philosophical argumentation to show that God is good since this claim is of paramount importance to his discussion of evil. In *ST* I, immediately after completing his presentation of the Five Ways, in q. 3 he defends the divine simplicity, that is, the complete absence of any kind of composition in God.

Then in q. 4 Thomas takes up the divine perfection and shows in article 1 that God is perfect. He recalls his earlier conclusion in *ST* I, q. 2, a. 3 that God is the first efficient cause of everything else and now concludes from this that God must therefore be most perfect. Just as matter insofar as it is matter is in potency, so an agent insofar as it is an agent is in act. Therefore God, as the first efficient cause, must be in act to the maximum degree and therefore maximally perfect. For, as Thomas explains, something is said to be perfect insofar as it is in act since what is perfect is that to which no perfection of any kind can be lacking.[7]

In *ST* I, q. 5, he turns to the good in general and without using the name "transcendental" here, deals with it as a transcendental property of being. What he says here is consistent with his development of five transcendental properties of being in his *Quaestiones disputatae De veritate (QDV)*, q. 1, a. 1. Thus in q. 5, a. 1 of the *ST* he points out that the good and being (*ens*) are identical in reality, even though they differ conceptually or in their explicit meanings. The nature of the good consists in this, that something is desirable for, as Aristotle states in *Nicomachean Ethics*, I,

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[6] On this see *QDP*, q. 3, a. 7, where he distinguishes four ways in which God as the first cause causes the actions of created agents (second causes); *ST* I, q. 105, a. 5, where he presents these as three ways. For discussion see my *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 451–452. For Thomas's view that omnipotence is a preamble of faith, see my "Thomas Aquinas on Demonstrating God's Omnipotence" in my *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas II* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 194–217. On providence as a preamble see Brian J. Shanley, "Thomas Aquinas on Demonstrating God's Providence," in Doolan, *The Science of Being*, 221–242.

[7] *ST* I, q. 4, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, IV: 50). Note especially: "nam perfectum dicitur, cui nihil deest secundum modum suae perfectionis."

c. 1, "the good is that which all things desire."[8] But now Thomas reasons that each and everything is desirable insofar as it is perfect, since all things desire their own perfection. And each thing is perfect insofar as it is in act.[9] Therefore, he concludes, something is good insofar as it is a being (*ens*), since *esse* (the act of existing) is the actuality of every thing, as he had already proposed in *ST* I, q. 3, a. 4 in his denial there that essence and *esse* are distinct in God. Hence, while being and good are identical in reality, good adds to being the meaning of desirability.

In q. 5, a. 3 he reasons that every being, insofar as it is being, is good. Again he brings in the notion of perfection by reasoning that every being insofar as it is being is in act, and therefore perfect in some sense, since every act is a certain perfection. But, he recalls, what is perfect is desirable and good, and so every being, insofar as it is a being, is good. In other words, good is a transcendental property of being. It should be noted that in this discussion he is speaking of goodness of being, or of ontological goodness; he has not yet here introduced moral goodness. It should also be noted that in a. 4 he brings out the point that the good, as that which all things desire, has the nature of an end or final cause.[10]

In q. 6 Thomas turns to the goodness of God. In a. 1 he maintains that to be good belongs to God in primary fashion. Again he recalls that something is good insofar as it is desirable, and that each thing desires its own perfection. But now he introduces the note of efficient causality. The perfection and form found in an effect is a certain likeness of its cause since every agent produces something like itself (*omne agens agit sibi simile*). This is an axiom that Thomas cites many times throughout his career.[11] But, he now reasons, an agent itself is also desirable and therefore has the nature of the good. This follows from the fact that the effect is good, and so, too, according to the axiom, its cause must also be good. What is desired of the agent is that its likeness be participated in by its effects. Because God is the first efficient cause of all other things, it follows that the nature of the good and the desirable must also belong to him. And so Dionysius in his *De divinis nominibus*, c. 4, attributes goodness to God

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[8] *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, c. 1, 1094a3.
[9] *ST* I, q. 5, a. 1 (*Editio Leonina*, IV: 56).
[10] *ST* I, q. 5, a. 3, a. 4 (*Editio Leonina,* IV: 59, 61).
[11] *ST* I, q. 6, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina,* IV: 66, ll. 28–29). Note especially: "Perfectio autem et forma effectus est quaedam similitudo agentis: cum omne agens agat sibi simile. Unde ipsum agens est appetibile, et habet rationem boni; hoc enim est quod de ipso appetitur, ut eius similitudo participetur" (ll. 28–33). On Aquinas's use and different ways of justifying this axiom, see my "Thomas Aquinas on Our Knowledge of God and the Axiom that Every Agent Produces Something Like Itself," chapter 7 of my *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas II*, 152–171.

as to the first efficient cause and says that God is called "good" as the one "from whom all other things subsist."[12]

In q. 6, a. 2 Thomas argues that God is the supreme good (*summum bonum*). He is not merely the supreme good in some species or in some genus. This is because all desired perfections flow forth from him as from their first cause and as from a source that is above every genus and every species of beings. Therefore the good is present in God as the highest cause which is above every species and every genus of cause and in which goodness is present in the most excellent fashion. Hence he is called the supreme good. In a. 4 he shows that all other things are good by reason of the divine goodness. As he explains, each and every other thing can be called good and a being (*ens*) insofar as it participates in the first being and the first good (God), although remotely and in deficient fashion. And so every creature is said to be good by reason of the divine goodness as the first exemplar, efficient, and final cause or principle of all other goodness.[13]

Evil as privation

In his explicit discussion of evil in the *QDM*, Thomas follows Augustine in describing it not as something positive, but rather as a special kind of negation known as privation, that is to say, the lack of being or of some characteristic that ought to be present in a given subject. As is well known, Augustine himself was troubled for many years about the reality of evil and how its presence could be reconciled with the existence of an all-good God and describes himself as having been aided by the Neoplatonic notion of evil as privation in his eventual success in freeing himself from the Manichean position.[14]

In Thomas's two most important discussions of evil, he begins by asking whether evil is something (*aliquid*), that is to say, a particular being as he phrases this in *QDM,* q. 1, a. 1, and in *ST* I, q. 48, a. 1, where he asks whether evil is a certain nature. In what is generally recognized as

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[12] For this in Dionysius see *DN* IV, 4, in *Corpus Dionysiacum,* vol. 1: *'De divinis nominibus,'* ed. Beate Regina Suchla (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 148–149 (PG 3: 700).

[13] *ST* I, q. 6, a. 2 (*Editio Leonina,* IV: 67–68) and especially, *ST* I, q. 6, a. 4, c. (*Editio Leonina,* IV: 70): "A primo igitur per suam essentiam ente et bono, unumquodque potest dici bonum et ens, inquantum participat ipsum per modum cuiusdam assimilationis, licet remote et deficienter […]. Sic ergo unumquodque dicitur bonum bonitate divina, sicut primo principio exemplari, effectivo et finali totius bonitatis."

[14] For a presentation of the position of the Manicheans based not only on Augustine's own description of their position but on other sources, see Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, 3rd ed. (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2002), especially chapters 4 and 5.

the earlier[15] of these two discussions, q. 48, a. 1 of *ST* I*,* Thomas responds by pointing out that when we are dealing with opposites, we may come to know one by means of the other. Thus we can think of darkness as the absence of light. So too, in order to understand evil we should turn to the good. He recalls that the good is that which is desirable. And since every nature desires its own existence (*esse*) and its own perfection, it follows that the existence and perfection of every nature has the nature of goodness. Therefore evil cannot signify any given *esse* (which should here be understood as the act of existing) or form or nature. It rather signifies a certain absence of good. And so, as he is quoted in the *sed contra* of this article, Dionysius says that evil is neither an existent nor a good, and since *ens inquantum huiusmodi*, is good, it follows that the negation of either one of these is also the negation of the other.[16]

   In the opening argument of the *sed contra* of *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, Thomas cites from Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, XI, c. 9: "evil is not some nature but a lack of good has taken on this name."[17] In his response Thomas notes that, like white, evil may be expressed in two ways. Thus by white one may have in mind that which is the subject of whiteness, a white thing; or one may signify that which is white insofar as it is white, namely the accident whiteness itself. So too, evil may signify that which is the subject of evil, and this is indeed a particular thing (*hoc aliquid*). Or one may have in mind evil itself, and this is not a particular thing but is rather the privation of some particular good. In support Thomas recalls again, following Aristotle, that something is good in the proper sense insofar as it is desirable. But that which is opposed to the good is said to be evil. Therefore, reasons Thomas, evil is that which is opposed to the desirable insofar as it is desirable. And it is impossible for this to be a something (an *aliquid*).[18]

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[15] See n. 4 above for Torrell on the date of *QDM.* Kevin L. Flannery argues on the strength of internal evidence that *QDM*, q. 6 is an earlier version of *QDV*, q. 24, a. 1, and hence prior to 1259. See his *Acts Amid Precepts: The Aristotelian Logical Structure of Thomas Aquinas's Moral Theory* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), Appendix C, "The Dating of *De Malo* Q. 6," 247–249. This suggestion does not seem to have won wide acceptance among Thomistic scholars.

[16] *ST* I, q. 48, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina,* IV: 490). Note especially: "Relinquitur ergo quod nomine mali significetur quaedam absentia boni. Et pro tanto dicitur quod malum *neque est existens nec bonum:* quia cum ens, inquantum huiusmodi, sit bonum, eadem est remotio utrorumque." For Dionysius see his *DN* IV, 20 (PG 3: 717; ed. Suchla, 165).

[17] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, s. c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 5, ll. 148–149): "malum non est natura aliqua set defectus boni hoc nomen accepit." Compare with the critical edition of Augustine's text: "Mali enim nulla natura est; sed amissio boni nomen accepit" (CCSL 48: 330, ll. 70–71).

[18] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 5, ll. 160–178). Note that like *hoc aliquid* (a particular thing), *aliquid* (something) is a technical expression for Aquinas and may be used to signify the third transcendental property of being which he derives in *QDV*, q. 1, a. 1.

In support Thomas offers three arguments. First, he recalls that a desirable object has the nature of an end (or final cause), and observes that the order of ends is like the order of agents or efficient causes. Insofar as an agent is higher and more universal, to that same degree the end for which it acts is a more universal good. As an example of this on the human level Thomas compares the ruler of a particular city who is interested in the good of that city with the king of a country who is concerned with the universal good of the entire kingdom. Just as one cannot regress to infinity in the order of efficient causes, each of which is caused by another, but must arrive at one first uncaused cause which is the universal cause of existing, so too there must be some universal good to which all more particular goods are to be traced. This universal good must be identical with the first and universal efficient cause. This follows because, since the desirable object moves the appetite, and the first moving cause must be unmoved, the first and universal agent must be the first and universal object of desire and hence the first and universal good. But what comes forth from the first and universal good must be some particular good just as what comes forth from the first and universal *causa essendi* must be some particular being (*ens*). Therefore whatever is a "something" (an *aliquid*) must be a particular good and so not opposed to the good. Therefore "evil insofar as it is evil is not something among [other] things but is the privation of some particular good and inheres in some particular good thing."[19]

In his second argument Thomas reasons that whatever exists among things has some appetite and inclination for something that befits itself. But what has the nature of the desirable has the nature of the good. Therefore, whatever exists as a thing among things has some agreement with some good. But evil insofar as it is evil does not agree with the good but is opposed to it. Therefore, evil itself is not an *aliquid* (a thing) among other things. Indeed, if *per impossibile*, it were a certain thing (*aliqua res*), it would desire nothing and would be desired by nothing. This follows from Thomas's point that whatever is desirable is good.[20]

In a third argument Thomas falls back on a cornerstone of his metaphysics according to which *esse* (the act of existing) is the act of all acts and the perfection of all perfections and therefore, as he puts it here, is desirable to the maximum degree. Thus we observe that everything naturally

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[19] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 5, ll. 179–214). Note the last sentence: "Unde relinquitur quod malum secundum quod est malum non est aliquid in rebus, set est alicuius particularis boni priuatio, alicui particulari bono inherens" (ll. 211–214).

[20] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 5–6, ll. 215–227).

desires to preserve its own existence (and therefore the act of existing that causes this) and resists that which is destructive of this insofar as it can. And in accord with his earlier reasoning, Thomas recalls that insofar as something is desirable – *esse* itself in this case – so it is good. Because evil is universally opposed to the good, it is also opposed to the act of existing itself. And because it is opposed to the act of existing itself, evil cannot be some particular thing (an *aliquid*); but that in which it occurs is indeed something such as an eye in which there is blindness.[21]

Kinds of evil

Accordingly, Thomas concludes his argumentation in *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1 to show that evil is not a thing or an entity, just as in *ST* I, q. 48, a. 1 he had shown that it has no nature. It is simply a privation or lack of being and hence of goodness that ought to be present in an appropriate subject. This, however, is not for Thomas to say that evil does not exist. But before developing this point, I would like to turn to his reply to the first opening argument in *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, for there he introduces an important distinction. Thomas is responding to a text from Isaiah 45:6–7: "I am the Lord who produces peace and creates evil." But, so runs the objection based on this text, everything that is created is "something." Therefore evil is something.[22]

Thomas responds that something is said to be evil in two different ways, either in the absolute sense (*simpliciter*), or in a qualified sense (*secundum quid*). That is said to be evil in the absolute sense which is evil in itself. This is something that is deprived of a particular good that is owing to its own perfection, in the way that sickness is evil for an animal because it involves the privation of a balance of humors, a balance that is necessary for the well being of the animal. But evil in a qualified sense is not evil in itself, but it is evil for something else because it involves the privation of a good that is necessary for the perfection of that other thing. As an example he notes that in the element fire, there is a privation of the form of water owing, presumably, to the extreme heat caused by the fire. The form of water is not necessary for the perfection of fire, but it is necessary for the perfection of water. Hence fire is not evil in itself, but it is evil for water.[23] This is an example of what is often called physical evil.

[21] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 6, ll. 228–242).
[22] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 1 (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 3, ll. 1–6).
[23] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1 (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 6, ll. 243–259).

Jacques Maritain cites a more contemporary example. For a microbe to feed on a human being's nervous system is good for the microbe, but this is not good for the human nervous system.[24] Thomas himself also offers an example from the moral order. The order of justice may require the privation of a particular good from someone who sins insofar as justice requires that a sinner be deprived of a particular good which that person desires. Thus this punishment is good in the absolute sense (*simpliciter*), but evil for that sinful person. And with regard to the text from *Isaiah* where God is said to create evil, Thomas explains that evil is here said to be created not insofar as it is evil but insofar as it is good *simpliciter,* but evil *secundum quid.*[25] But most important for our purpose here, this response also tells us that we should distinguish between physical evil and moral evil.

In responding to another objection (ad 4), Thomas tells us that evil is said to be contrary to the good more so in moral matters than in natural or physical matters. Moral matters depend upon the will and the object of the will is good and evil. But every act receives its species from its object. Therefore, when an act of the will is directed toward evil, it takes on the nature and the name of evil. And this evil is properly contrary to one's good.[26]

Even though evil is not a thing or entity in itself, and even though it has no nature or essence in itself, Aquinas nonetheless recognizes that it exists and is very real. This applies both to physical evil, such as an illness or an earthquake, and to moral evil, as we shall see. In *ST* I, q. 48, a. 2, Thomas asks whether evil is found in things. He begins by referring to a point he had already made in q. 47, namely, that the perfection of the universe requires that there be inequality among things, so that all degrees of goodness may be filled. Thus, in q. 47, a. 1, he had argued that the distinction and multiplicity of created beings was created by God himself. This is because God gave existence to other things in order to communicate his goodness to creatures and in order for it to be represented by them. Because no single creature could sufficiently represent the divine goodness (because, of course, of its infinite perfection), God produced many and diverse creatures so that what was missing from one's representation of his goodness could be made up for by others. For the goodness which is in God in absolute and uniform fashion is found in creatures in multiple

[24] Jacques Maritain, *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1942), 22.

[25] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1 (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 6, ll. 259–271).

[26] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4 (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 6, ll. 300–309).

and divided fashion. Therefore the entire universe more perfectly partici-
pates in and represents the divine goodness than can any single creature.[27]

In q. 47, a. 2, Thomas concludes that just as God is the cause of the dis-
tinction found in created things, so is he the cause of the inequality that
obtains among them. In sum, here he points out that God is the cause
of these degrees of inequality because, without them, the universe would
be less perfect than it is now and would less perfectly reflect the divine
goodness.[28]

To return to Thomas's discussion in *ST* I, q. 48, a. 2, where he asks
whether evil is actually found among existing things, he recalls that the
perfection of the universe requires inequality among its members. Just as
in the order of existence certain things cannot lose their existence (incor-
poreal things) and others can (corporeal things), so too there is one degree
of goodness according to which something is so good that it can never
fall short of goodness (which seems to refer to God alone along with the
angels and blessed in heaven), and another degree of goodness according
to which something good can fall short of its goodness. And then, in what
does not strike one as an overly optimistic remark, he comments that it
follows from this that some of those things that can fall short of goodness
will in fact at times (*interdum*) actually fall short, and so evil is found to
exist, just as does corruption, which, he adds, is itself a kind of evil.[29] And,
as we shall shortly see, he applies this remark both to physical evil and to
moral evil.

Here we should note his reply to the second opening objection he has
raised in this same a. 2 of q. 48. This objection notes that being (*ens*) and
"thing" (*res*) are convertible (which follows from Thomas's derivation of
the transcendental properties of being in *QDV*, q. 1, a. 1, where he includes
res as one of those properties). But, the objection continues, if evil is an
ens, it is a certain thing. Thomas responds by making an all-important dis-
tinction. Being (*ens*) is expressed in two different ways. It may signify the
entity of a thing insofar as being is divided into the ten supreme genera or
predicaments. When taken in this way, being is indeed convertible with

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[27] *ST* I, q. 47, a. 1 (*Editio Leonina,* IV: 485–486).
[28] *ST* I, q. 47, a. 2 (*Editio Leonina,* IV: 486–487).
[29] *ST* I, q. 48, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina,* IV: 492). In his *Aquinas and the Cry of Rachel: Thomistic
Reflections on the Problem of Evil* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press,
2013), John F. X. Knasas (following Thomas's ad 2), refers to such evils as "quandoque evils" and
devotes considerable attention to them in distinguishing them from natural evils that follow from
the corruption of things according to the regular and persistent cycles of generation and corruption
in nature. It is here that he would place horrendous evils. See the whole of his chapter 3, especially
49, 53–61.

"thing." But taken in this sense, no privation is a being (*ens*) and therefore neither is evil. However, being (*ens*) may be taken in another way, insofar as it signifies the truth of a proposition that responds to the question *an est* asking "Is it?" or "Does it exist?" The answer to this is: "It is" and this of course means "It exists." It is in this sense that we can say that blindness *is* in the eye, or that any other privation *is*. And since evil is a privation, in this way we can say that evil exists, even though it is not a thing or an entity taken in the first mentioned meaning of "*ens*."³⁰

Thomas makes this same point very succinctly in responding to the 19th opening argument in *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1: "Being (*ens*) is said in two ways: in one way insofar as it signifies the nature of the ten genera and, taken in this way, neither evil nor any privation is a being (*ens*) nor something (*aliquid*); in another way insofar as it answers to the question 'Is it?' and so taken evil is just as blindness is."³¹ Thomas adds that evil is not something (*aliquid*) because to be something is to answer both the question "Is it?" and the question "What is it?"

But if evil is not a thing nor a being or entity, how can it exist? Thomas's simple answer to this in *ST* I, q. 48, a. 3, and in *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, is that evil exists in the good as in its subject. In the first text he points out that not every negation of a good in a given subject is evil. The mere absence or negation of a higher degree of perfection in a lower and less perfect being is not itself evil because it is not a privation, that is, the negation or absence of a good that should be present in that subject. If one were to deny this, Thomas counters that things that do not exist at all would be evil. And every finite being would be evil because it lacked perfections found in higher beings. He recalls that every being (that exists) in actuality is a certain good, and then notes that this also applies to a being in potency (the subject both of an actually present form and of the privation of that form). A being in potency insofar as it is in potency is ordered to a certain good, and therefore is also good potentially. It follows therefore that the subject of evil is some good.³²

Thomas offers a fuller and more complicated explanation of this in *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, where he asks whether evil exists in the good. His opening argument in the *sed contra* cites from Augustine's *Enchridion*, c. 14, to

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³⁰ *ST* I, q. 48, a. 2, ad 2 (*Editio Leonina,* IV: 492).
³¹ *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 19 (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 8, ll. 468–473): "Ad undeuicesimum dicendum quod ens dicitur dupliciter: uno modo secundum quod significat naturam decem generum, et sic neque malum neque aliqua priuatio est ens neque aliquid; alio modo secundum quod respondetur ad questionem an est, et sic malum est sicut et cecitas est."
³² *ST* I, q. 48, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina,* IV: 493).

the effect that evil can only exist in the good.[33] Thomas begins his response by asserting that evil cannot exist except in the good. To support this he observes that one may speak of the good in two ways: first, of the good taken absolutely (*absolute*), and secondly, of this particular good thing, such as a good human being, or a good eye. Given the point he has made previously that the good is that which is desirable, Thomas now argues that what is desirable in itself is also good in itself. And this, he concludes, is an end. Given the fact that we desire an end, we also desire the things that are ordered to that end. And because they are ordered to an end or to a good, they too attain to the nature of the good. Given this, even useful things are included as a division of the good.[34]

At this point, as he had already done in *ST* I, q. 48, a. 3, Thomas now turns to potency and its claim upon the good. Whatever is in potency to the good is by that very fact ordered to the good since to be in potency is nothing other than to be ordered to an act. Therefore whatever is in potency has the nature of the good. So every subject, including prime matter, by reason of the fact that it is in potency with respect to some perfection, shares in the nature of the good. Thomas notes that because the Platonists did not distinguish between matter and privation and viewed matter as nonbeing, they held that the good applies to more things than does being. Thomas also comments that Dionysius seems to have followed this approach in his *De divinis nominibus*, where he places the good above being.[35]

In his discussion in *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, Thomas acknowledges that there is some truth in this Platonic position. He distinguishes matter from privation and here writes that matter is nonbeing only *per accidens* and is not to be described as being except in potency and enjoys *esse* in the unqualified sense (*simpliciter*) only through substantial form; but it has potency of its very nature (*per se ipsam*). Indeed, in many other contexts he maintains that in and of itself prime matter is pure potency. And since in the present article he has already shown that potency pertains to the nature of the good, he now concludes that the good pertains to potency of its very nature as potency.[36]

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[33] CCSL 46: 55; PL 40: 239.

[34] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2 (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 10, ll. 130–145). On the division of good into the *bonum honestum, bonum utile,* and *bonum delectabile,* see *ST* I, q. 5, a. 6.

[35] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 10–11, ll. 146–161). For more on this see Thomas's treatment in his *DDN*, V, l. 1 (ed. Marietti, 231, §606; 232, §610; and 233, §616). See Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 89–97.

[36] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 11, ll. 159–168). Note especially: "et cum potentia pertineat ad rationem boni, ut dictum est, sequitur quod bonum conueniat ei per se ipsam"

Harking back to the distinction he had made at the beginning of this same article, Thomas now observes that while every being whether in act or only in potency can be called good absolutely, it does not follow from this that every thing (*res*) is this particular good thing. For instance, if a given human being may be good absolutely speaking, it does not follow that the same person is a good flute-player. That will be true only if the individual human being also has mastered the art of playing the flute. Moreover, if it be granted that a particular human being is good in a certain way, it does not follow from this that this person is a good human being. That which makes each individual thing good is its own virtue. In support of this claim Thomas cites Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, II, c. 6, 1106a15, 22. He takes virtue as he is using it here as the maximum (realization) of a potentiality, basing himself on Aristotle's *De caelo*, I, c. 11, 281a14.[37] Thomas concludes from this that a given thing is said to be good when it has its proper perfection.

In light of this Thomas now distinguishes three different ways in which good may be taken, thereby expanding on the twofold division he had offered at the beginning of this same a. 2. First, the perfection of a thing may itself be called good, as sharpness of vision is said to be the good of the eye, and virtue the good of a human being. Second, the thing that enjoys its perfection may be called good, such as the human who is virtuous or the eye that sees sharply. Third, the subject itself which is in potency to a perfection may be said to be good, such as the soul or the essence of the eye in the above examples. And since he has said that evil is a privation of a good that is due, and since privation can only exist in a being in potency, he now concludes that evil resides in the good taken in the third way just distinguished, that is, as the subject that is in potency to the good. Good taken in the first sense, as the perfection itself, is lost by evil. And the good taken in the second sense as composed of a subject and its perfection is diminished by evil in that the subject remains but its perfection is removed.[38]

(ll. 166–168). For texts and discussion of prime matter as pure potency, see my *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 312–317.

[37] For a helpful discussion of Aquinas's appeal to this text from Aristotle here and in other discussions of defining virtue in terms of its maximum instantiation, and a defense of Thomas's interpretation of the Stagirite concerning this against Harry Jaffa's critique, see Michael Pakaluk, "Structure and Method in Aquinas's Appropriation of Aristotelian Ethical Theory," in *Aquinas and the 'Nicomachean Ethics'*, ed. Tobias Hoffmann, Jörn Müller, and Matthias Perkams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 33–51, at 44–46.

[38] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 11, ll. 186–209).

The cause of evil

With this we may turn with Thomas to a crucial issue concerning the cause of evil. His most profound treatment of this, especially in the case of moral evil, is found in his *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3. There he asks whether a good is the cause of evil. In one of his arguments in the *sed contra,* he again quotes from Augustine's *ENC,* this time from c. 14 to the effect that evil cannot arise except from the good.[39] Thomas introduces his response by noting that good is the cause of evil insofar as evil can have a cause. But evil cannot have a cause per se. Thomas offers three reasons for this.[40]

First, that which has a per se cause is intended by its cause; but whatever happens beyond the intention of an agent is not a per se effect of that agent but only an effect *per accidens* (as when digging a grave to bury a body is the cause *per accidens* of the discovery of a buried treasure, something that is completely beyond the intention of the one digging the grave). But evil cannot be intended or willed or desired insofar as it is evil because whatever is desired has the nature of the good, to which evil is opposed insofar as it is evil. Hence no one does evil except by seeking something that appears to be good to that person, as it seems good to an adulterer that he should enjoy sensible pleasure and for this reason he commits adultery. Therefore evil has no per se cause.[41]

Second, that evil does not have a per se cause also follows from the fact that every per se effect bears some likeness to its cause, either when the effect has the same meaning as the cause as in univocal agents, or only in deficient fashion as in the case of equivocal agents. Again Thomas employs the similitude axiom that every agent produces something like itself. In pursuing this he reasons that an agent or efficient cause acts insofar as it is in act, and this implies the presence of the good. Therefore evil insofar as it is evil is not likened to an efficient cause insofar as that cause is an agent. And so again it follows that evil has no per se efficient cause.[42]

Thirdly, the same conclusion follows from the fact that every per se efficient cause has a certain and determined order to its effect. But what happens according to a determined order is not evil, since evil occurs when one transgresses or sets aside an order that is due. Therefore evil does not have a per se cause.[43]

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[39] For Augustine see his *ENC*, c. 14 (CCSL 46: 55; PL 40: 238).
[40] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 14, ll. 139–143).
[41] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 14–15, ll. 143–158).
[42] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 15, ll. 159–160).
[43] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 15. ll. 169–174).

Yet Thomas recognizes that evil must have some kind of cause and now seeks to determine what this might be. Because evil does not exist in itself per se but inheres in some subject as a privation, for evil to be present there is beyond the nature (*praeternaturaliter*) of that in which it inheres. But for something to inhere in a subject in a way that is beyond its nature must have some cause, as water would not be hot without some cause that heats it. Hence, if evil cannot have a cause per se, by process of elimination it can only have a cause *per accidens*. But, he continues, that which is only *per accidens* must be traced back to that which is per se. And if he has shown that evil does not have a cause per se, it follows that only the good has a cause per se. But the per se cause of the good must itself be good since a cause per se produces something like itself. From this he concludes that some good is the *per accidens* cause of every evil. He acknowledges that evil, which itself is a lack or deficiency of the good, can happen to be a cause of some other evil, but insists that one must ultimately reason back to a first cause of evil that is not an evil but a good.[44]

One may ask how evil is caused from the good. Aquinas proposes that this may happen in two ways: either when a good (agent) is deficient and so causes evil, or when a good agent produces an evil effect *per accidens*. Thomas goes on to give examples of each and to apply this distinction both to physical evil and to moral evil. To illustrate the case of a physical agent that produces evil *per accidens*, he again turns to the example of the active power of fire (which is good) but which causes the corruption (*non esse*) of the water in some way, presumably by overheating it. This natural or active power of fire does not by its nature and per se tend to corrupt the water; rather it tends to introduce the form of fire into matter, from which the corruption of the water necessarily follows. To illustrate a case of physical evil caused by a deficiency on the part of a cause that is good, Thomas offers the example of the birth of a monstrosity. He identifies as the cause of the monstrosity a deficiency within the seed of the parent. But if one searches for the cause of this deficiency or evil in the seed, one will eventually get to something that is good, which is a cause *per accidens* of the evil in the seed even though it itself is not a deficient cause. By a process of alteration this cause introduces a quality contrary to what is required for the seed to be well disposed. The more perfect the power of this contrary altering cause is, the more it will introduce the consequent deficiency into the seed. Thus the evil or deficiency in the seed is not

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44 *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 15, ll. 175–200).

caused by a good agent insofar as it is deficient, but rather insofar as it is perfect.[45]

As regards evil voluntary actions (moral evils), Thomas notes that there are similarities as well as differences between these and physical evils. Something that is pleasurable to the senses may move the will of an adulterer and entice it to take delight in such a pleasure against the order of right reason and divine law, and thus to commit moral evil. Thomas acknowledges that if the adulterer's will were to receive the attracting impression of the pleasurable object with the same force and necessity with which a natural body is acted on by a natural agent, the cases of physical evil and voluntary evil would be identical. But, Thomas insists, this is not so because no matter how powerfully an external and pleasurable sense object may attract someone, that person's will retains the power to acquiesce or not acquiesce. Therefore the cause of the evil that occurs when the will does acquiesce to the sensible object is not the pleasurable object but rather the will itself.[46]

Thomas concludes that the will may cause moral evil according to both of the orders he had singled out above, that is to say, as a cause *per accidens*, or as a deficient good. The will may be a cause *per accidens* of some moral evil because the will is attracted to something that is good in a qualified sense (*secundum aliquid*), but this good is conjoined to something that is evil in the absolute sense (*simpliciter*).[47]

And the will may also be the cause of moral evil "as a deficient good insofar as one must preunderstand in the will some deficiency before the deficient choice itself, by which it chooses a good *secundum quid* which is evil in the absolute sense (*simpliciter*)."[48] To account for this Thomas introduces what is arguably the most interesting philosophical aspect of his discussion of moral evil, and what Jacques Maritain describes as one of Thomas's most original philosophical discoveries.[49] Thomas reasons that in cases where one thing should serve as the rule and measure of another

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[45] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 15, ll. 201–226). For Thomas's apparent reference to this example in Aristotle as interpreted by Averroes, see Aristotle, *Physics*, II, c. 14, 199b3–7, and Averroes, *In II Physicorum, Com.* 82, in *Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 12 vols. (Venice: 1562–1574), IV: fol. 80B.

[46] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 15–16, ll. 227–242).

[47] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 16, ll. 245–248).

[48] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 16, ll. 248–252) "set ut bonum deficiens in quantum oportet in uoluntate preconsiderare aliquem defectum ante ipsam electionem deficientem, per quam eligit secundum quid bonum quod est simpliciter malum."

[49] See *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 23; *Existence and the Existent* (New York: Pantheon, 1948), 90; *God and the Permission of Evil* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce, 1966), 34; French version: *Dieu et la permission du mal* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1963), 38–40.

thing, good results in what is regulated and measured only insofar as it is regulated and conformed to the appropriate measure; but evil results when what should be regulated and measured is not conformed to the rule and measure. To illustrate this he offers the example of a craftsman who wants to cut something along a straight line, but who does not use an appropriate ruler or measure. As a consequence he makes a crooked cut, that is, one that is bad or evil. And this deficiency or evil will have resulted from the fact that the craftsman made the cut without using the ruler or measure.

So too, continues Thomas, pleasure and anything else involved in human acts must be measured in accord with the rule of right reason and divine law. Therefore, a nonuse of the rule of reason and of divine law is presupposed on the part of the human will before it makes a disordered choice such as to commit adultery.[50] Thomas's use of the term "before" in this statement should be taken as applying at least to the order of nature, and quite plausibly also to the order of time.[51]

Thomas comments: "There is no need to seek for some cause for this nonuse of the aforementioned moral rule because the freedom of the will, by which it can act or not act, is enough to account for this."[52] He also points out that this non-consideration of the appropriate moral rule or

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[50] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 16, ll. 253–267). Note: "Similiter delectatio et quodlibet aliud in rebus humanis est mensurandum et regulandum secundum regulam rationis et legis diuine; unde non uti regula rationis et legis diuine preintelligitur in uoluntate ante inordinatam electionem" (ll. 263–267).

[51] Maritain seems to have changed his position on this point, having favored a distinction between two instants of nature within one instant of time in his presentation in his *Existence and the Existent*, 90, with a backward reference to the same view in his earlier *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 26, and corrected this in his later *God and the Permission of Evil*, 51–54, where he expresses a preference for two moments in time as well.

[52] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 16, ll. 268–270): "Huius autem quod est non uti regula predicta non oportet aliquam causam querere, quia ad hoc sufficit ipsa libertas uoluntatis, per quam potest agere uel non agere." A question may be raised concerning what the expression *ad hoc* refers to in this text. In Maritain's discussions he takes this as referring to the nonconsideration itself. This nonbeing is caused by the freedom of the will. And this reading is supported by the two major English translations of this passage. See Jean Oesterle's translation in *On Evil* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 22; and especially the rather free translation in Richard Regan and Brian Davies, *The 'De Malo' of Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 71–72: "since the very freedom of the will, by which it can act or not act, is enough to explain the nonuse." However, in his *Saint Thomas d'Aquin et le mal: Foi chrétienne et théodicée* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1992)*,* 171–173, Laurent Sentis insists against Maritain that this completely reverses the meaning of the sentence: Thomas's point is that there is *no* cause for the nonconsideration or nonuse of the rule, and by using *ad hoc* he refers to the freedom of the will simply to account for the ensuing sinful choice that follows upon the nonconsideration. While this is an interesting proposal from the philosophical side and even strengthens the lack of need for God to be viewed as the cause of the nonconsideration, it does not appear to be the natural reading of the text.

norm is not in itself evil. Indeed, one need not and one cannot spend all of one's life reciting in one's mind the ten commandments and every other moral precept. But the note of fault or moral evil first enters in when the soul, without actually considering the moral norm, proceeds to a choice of this kind, just as the craftsman does not "sin" because he does not always hold the ruler or measure in his hand, but only when, without holding the ruler, he tries to saw in a straight line. And so, too, reasons Thomas, fault on the part of the will, or moral evil, does not consist in the fact that the moral agent does not actually consider the moral norm, but rather in this, that without attending to the appropriate rule or measure, the agent proceeds to choose.[53] Aquinas cites from Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, XII, c. 7, to the effect that the will is the cause of sin insofar as it is deficient, but he compares this deficiency to silence or to darkness because this deficiency is negation alone or a pure negation.[54]

I have already mentioned Maritain's high praise for this solution. He is especially taken with Thomas's view that no cause need be sought for the moment of non-consideration on the part of the will except the will itself. Maritain describes it as "negation, an absence, the lack of a good which is

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[53] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 16, ll. 271–283). Note: "Et similiter culpa uoluntatis non est in hoc quod non actu attendit ad regulam rationis uel legis diuine, set ex hoc quod non habens regulam uel mensuram huiusmodi procedit ad eligendum" (ll. 281–285).

[54] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 16, ll. 285–289, especially 289): "defectus ille est negatio sola." Also see ad 13 (17, ll. 382–389): "defectus … non est culpa neque pena, set negatio pura" (ll. 383–385). For Augustine see *DCD*, XII, c. 7 (CCSL 48: 362). On this text and its importance, also see Bernadette E. O'Connor, "Insufficient Ado about the Human Capacity for Being and Maritain's Dissymmetry Solution," in *Aquinas & Maritain on Evil: Mystery and Metaphysics*, ed. James G. Hanink (Washington, D. C.: American Maritain Association, 2013), 155–169 (see 157, n. 8 and the following pages on Thomas's usage here of the term *defectus* to signify a mere negation that is not yet a privation). For a critical discussion of Maritain's interpretation of Thomas's view, see Jean-Hervé Nicolas, "La permission du péché," *Revue thomiste* 60 (1960): 5–37, 185–206, 509–546, to which Maritain responded in his *God and the Permission*, followed decades later by a partial retraction by Nicolas of his earlier presentation especially concerning "God's permissive will" in "La volenté salvifique de Dieu contrariée par le péché," *Revue thomiste* 92 (1992): 177–196. For a very thorough study of Francisco Marín-Sola as an influential but unacknowledged source for Maritain's development of his own interpretation, see Michael D. Torre, "Francisco Marín-Sola, O. P., and the Origin of Jacques Maritain's Doctrine on God's Permission of Evil," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 4 (2006): 55–94, and most recently his *Do not Resist the Spirit's Call: Francisco Marín-Sola on Sufficient Grace* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), which contains an English translation of Marín-Sola's three long articles on this general topic along with a thorough review in the Conclusion of more recent literature on the reception of his views as well as on Maritain's interpretation. See 227–257 and on the issue of nonconsideration, 263–265 and for Marín-Sola's text, 47. Also see 249, n. 90 for reference to Jack Cahalan's electronic response to Torre's claim that Maritain borrowed heavily and without acknowledgment from Marín-Sola especially in dealing with the nonbeing (nonconsideration) in Thomas's account. While much of the material covered by Nicolas and Torre is theological, and to some degree also that treated by Maritain, especially in *God and the Permission*, there is a considerable amount of philosophical content in their respective studies as well.

not yet due," and a bit farther on notes that this first moment is "voluntary, it is free, and it is not yet sin but the root of sin; it is a certain nothingness, the nothingness of the consideration of a rule, it is a certain nothingness introduced by the creature at the start of his action; it is a mere absence, a mere nothingness, but it is the root proper of evil action."[55]

By emphasizing the nothingness of the moment of non-consideration, Maritain argues that because it is nothingness, it is something "in which the creature is the first, the primary cause; there then, is a line in which the creature is the primary cause, but it is the line of nothingness, and of evil."[56] And thus it will follow that God, the First Cause of all created being and action, is not the cause of this non-consideration and hence not responsible for the following evil act. Even so, it should be recalled here that for Aquinas, God is not only the creating and conserving cause of a creature and its power to act, but also a concurring cause that moves the created cause when it acts in the way that the First Cause moves all second or created causes when they act. Even in the case of acts of free choice, God moves such agents to act in accord with their nature. Just as he moves necessary agents to act in accord with their nature and hence necessarily, so he moves contingent or free agents to act in accord with their nature, that is, freely.[57] This divine motion will therefore also apply to a morally evil act in terms of all that is ontologically positive in that act itself, but not to the prior moment of non-consideration.[58]

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[55] Maritain, *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 31; also *Existence and the Existent*, 89–92; *God and the Permission*, 34–38, 45–54. Thomas himself does speak of this special notion of nonconsideration or nonbeing in other writings, although never as thoroughly as in *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3. See *SCG* III, c. 10; *ST* I, q. 49, a. 1, ad 3; *ST* I-II, q. 75, a. 1, ad 3, all cited by Maritain in *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 40–43, n. 8. Also see Michael D. Torre, "The Grace of God and the Sin of Man," in Hanink, *Aquinas & Maritain on Evil*, 170–203, at 175, n. 18 and his discussion there, 173–186. *SCG* III, c. 10 ("Videtur autem") indicates that this preexisting *defectus* in the will is voluntary but not itself a moral fault: "Est igitur voluntarius. Non tamen peccatum morale" (*Editio Leonina*, XIV: 26), and hence runs counter to Sentis's interpretation of the key text in *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3 (see n. 52 above). On *SCG* III, c. 10, also see Sentis, 85–91.

[56] Maritain, *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 35.

[57] See Thomas's *QDP*, q. 3, a. 7. For his explicit application of this to the will see also: "sequetur quod ipse in quolibet operante immediate operetur, non exclusa operatione voluntatis et naturae" (ed. Marietti, 58, §20). Also see *QDM*, q. 6 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 148–149, ll. 308–415); and *ST* I-II, q. 10, a. 4. On this see my *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas,* 451–452, and my *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas II*, 258–263. Also see Brian J. Shanley, *The Thomist Tradition* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 202–205.

[58] Many Thomists, influenced by the terminology of Dominic Bañez, claim that Thomas therefore holds that God moves free created agents with a "physical pre-motion." Not finding this terminology in Thomas's texts, I recommend against using it because it slants Thomas's solution in the direction of a determinism he did not defend. For similar reservations about Bañez's position, see Shanley, *The Thomist Tradition*, 107, n. 56; 204–205. Limitations of space preclude a fuller examination here of Aquinas's effort to reconcile divine concurrence (and foreknowledge) with human freedom.

Concluding remarks

This reading of Thomas's texts, especially of *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, would seem to remove God from being the direct or indirect cause of the sinful agent's non-consideration of the appropriate moral norm and hence of the deficiency required for the subsequent immoral act itself which is, of course, a privation of rectitude in the sinner's act of choice. Nonetheless, certain problems remain if one stops here in considering Thomas's overall philosophical solution to the problem of physical evil.

On the one hand, there is merit in his view considered above in *ST* I, qq. 47 and 48 that many physical evils may be accounted for as following from the distinctions and inequalities present in many created beings. These inequalities follow from God's goodness and hence from his desire that the created universe should reflect his goodness as perfectly as it can. An ordered universe in which lower levels are subordinated to higher levels reflects God's goodness much more perfectly than any universe with fewer or perhaps no diverse levels of being. If in certain cases the naturally produced action of one kind of being, while good for that being, inflicts a privation or a physical evil on another being, this kind of evil is permitted by God because of the greater good of the universe taken as a whole. Indeed, God may be viewed as a *per accidens* cause of such evils, but never of moral evil.

There is a difficulty, however, in understanding how this explanation can account for some kinds of physical evils that befall human beings; for they are not merely parts of that greater whole known as the universe; they are also individual persons, endowed with intellects and wills, and capable of acting freely. Why should they be subjected to horrendous physical evils such as massive earthquakes which take the lives of hundreds or even thousands of people, including infants, and inflict tremendous suffering on many of those who survive?

One approach is to respond that we must have complete confidence in divine providence and that, even though often we cannot understand how a particular natural disaster contributes to the greater good of the universe, given our confidence in God's omniscience and the providence following from this, we know that he and he alone can understand how all the parts fit together in contributing to the greater good of the whole. For an excellent statement of God's exercise of his providence over all creation including individuals, see *SCG* III, c. 76 and those that follow.[59]

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[59] For a helpful examination of Thomas's philosophical argumentation for divine providence, see Shanley, "Thomas Aquinas on Demonstrating God's Providence," 221–242.

And we may also recall Thomas's reply with Augustine to the objection in *ST* I, q. 2, a. 3 to the effect that God is so good that he can draw good out of evil. Even so, it is still difficult to understand why the particular good and even the lives of thousands of individual human persons including innocent infants should be sacrificed in such situations. Here philosophy seems to have reached its limit.

Thomas himself seems to have realized at this point that something was still lacking in his discussion of evil and its cause or causes because immediately after *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, he introduces an important distinction in q. 1, a. 4 between evil of fault and evil of punishment. In the *sed contra* he quotes what he takes to be another work by Augustine, although in fact it is not by him, to this effect: "There is a twofold evil for a rational creature, one whereby it willingly falls short of the supreme good, and another by which it is punished against its will."[60] Thomas holds that this division of evil into fault and punishment applies only to rational creatures since it is of the nature of fault to arise according to one's will, and the nature of punishment to be against one's will.[61]

In intellectual creatures one kind of evil consists of a disordered act on the part of the will for which someone is rightly blamed, namely, fault. But, writes Thomas, in creatures another kind of evil consists of the privation of a *habitus* or form or something that is necessary for a person to act well and such evils may apply to the soul or to the body or to extrinsic things. And according to the judgment of the Catholic faith, such an evil is called a punishment.[62]

In his subsequent discussion of the nature of punishment, Thomas notes that the punishment must be related in some way to a fault, since someone is thought to be punished properly only if that person suffers evil for what he or she has done. Here again he cites the tradition of the (Catholic) faith as holding that a rational creature could suffer no harm with respect to the soul or with respect to the body or with respect to external things unless there was some preceding sin either committed by that person or incurred by his or her sharing in (human) nature. The privation of any such good that someone can use to act well, whether this person be an angel or a human being, should be called a punishment and

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[60] This work, entitled *De fide ad Petrum,* is in fact by Fulgentius (See PL 40: 773 = PL 65: 700A; CCSL 91-A: 751). For Thomas's citation see *QDM*, q. 1, a. 4 (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 19, ll. 89–94): "Set contra est quod Augustinus dicit in libro De fide ad Petrum. 'Geminum est creature rationalis malum: unum quo uoluntarie deficit a summo bono, alterum quo inuita punitur.' Per que duo exprimuntur pena et culpa. Ergo malum diuiditur per penam et culpam."

[61] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 4, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 19, ll. 95–110).

[62] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 4, c. (*Editio Leonina,* XXIII: 20, ll. 127–139).

hence every evil for a rational creature falls either under fault or under punishment.[63]

Here Thomas has obviously introduced important theological considerations based on his religious belief in an original fall on the part of our first parents, as well as on the fall of the angels and the consequent loss of grace.[64] And now he has offered a theological explanation for many of the physical evils suffered by human beings. But a considerable amount of mystery remains concerning which of these explanations one should employ when one tries to account for a particular physical evil, especially one that is horrendous. With this turn to a theological explanation, Thomas moves beyond the limits of metaphysics, and so our study also comes to its end.

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[63] See *QDM*, q. 1, a. 4: "Indeed, the tradition of faith holds it as certain that the rational creature could have incurred no evil either so far as concerns the soul or as concerns the body or as concerns external goods except from a preceding sin, either of the person, or even of the nature. And so it follows that every such privation of good which man can use to operate rightly is called a punishment, and this applies with equal reason to the angels. And thus every evil of the rational creature is contained under either fault or punishment" (Oesterle translation, p. 29). Note the Latin for the last rather sweeping remark: "Et sic omne malum rationalis creature uel sub culpa uel sub pena continetur" (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 20, ll. 151–153). Also see Thomas's reply to obj. 10 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 21, ll. 270–273); cf. *ST* I, q. 48, aa. 5 and 6. Also see Shanley, *The Thomist Tradition*, 97–98, 101–102; Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 68–70. In *QDM*, q. 1, a. 5, Thomas concludes that evil of fault has more of the nature of evil than evil of punishment.

[64] Thomas will treat original sin fully in *QDM*, q. 4 (in terms of itself and its origin) and q. 5 (in terms of its effects).

Weakness and willful wrongdoing in Aquinas's De malo

Bonnie Kent and Ashley Dressel

Does knowing what we ought to do ensure that we do it, or can people sin out of weakness? Aquinas's response to this question in *QDM* begins by endorsing the view long held by Christian theologians: people can indeed sin out of weakness, and sins of weakness should be distinguished from sins of ignorance.[1] When Aquinas explains how sins of weakness come about, his response proves much less conventional. It draws heavily on Aristotle's account of *akrasia* in Book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* a text fairly new to the Latin West but already a topic of controversy among the masters of Paris.[2]

Aquinas argues that someone who sins from weakness does not recognize at the time she acts that she is doing something wrong. Although the agent holds a moral principle forbidding the kind of action she wants to perform, her mind is so clouded by emotion that she does not see how the principle applies to the situation in which she finds herself. Only afterward does she recognize, with regret, that she has done something wrong.[3]

An analysis like this naturally invites a challenge: surely people can deliberate about and choose an act they know to be wrong at the very moment that they choose it. While a person's emotions might cloud his mind, there is no reason to think that they always do. He might simply decide that the moral badness of some particular act, all things considered, matters less than what he stands to gain from it. Consider, for example, an admirably truthful person, normally averse to dishonesty of all kinds, but frustrated by several years of arduous but futile efforts to land a tenure-track teaching job. Now suppose someone asks in a job interview whether he assigned any feminist texts in the various ethics courses he has taught. The truthful answer would be "No, I never thought to include

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[1] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 9, c.
[2] Robert Grosseteste's Latin translation of the complete *Nicomachean Ethics* became available around 1246–1247. Before then, most masters had read at most fragments of Book VII.
[3] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 9, c. and ad 7.

any." Instead, the candidate answers, "Yes, I always assign at least one or two." His passionate desire for a job offer has not distorted his memory of the works he assigned. On the contrary, the candidate knows he is lying; he himself considers lying morally bad, but he decides to lie anyway to improve his chances of getting an offer.

Cases where people knowingly do wrong seem to be at least as common as cases where they temporarily fail to recognize how their own moral principles apply. We can easily imagine other examples, such as ones involving adultery, where someone chooses an act she believes to be morally wrong for the sake of physical pleasure. The agent might have a moral principle prohibiting adultery that has always guided her behavior in the past. She might choose to violate it now not because her moral principles have changed or because she fails to see how the salient principle applies, but because, in this particular situation, she cares more about the prospect of pleasure. Do Aristotle and Aquinas deny that such behavior is possible?

As most scholars interpret him, Aristotle does deny that such behavior is possible. Neither Aristotle's akratic agent nor his vicious person chooses a morally bad act while recognizing it as such.[4] Aristotle's self-controlled (or "continent") person resists temptation, while his virtuous person never feels seriously tempted to do something morally bad. Aquinas argues, to the contrary, that someone *can* choose a morally bad act while recognizing it is as such. He simply classifies sins like these as sins from *malitia*, not sins of weakness.

What makes a sin one of weakness is precisely the role of emotion, whether in leading a person to behave impulsively, without taking time to deliberate, or in distorting her reasoning, so that she loses sight of a moral principle that normally guides her behavior.[5] Someone's emotions can themselves be sins of weakness if they run counter to reason and the person has the ability to control them, yet fails to do so. Sins from *malitia,* by contrast, are cases of willful wrongdoing: actions done knowingly and deliberately, without cognitive impairment caused by emotion.

The present chapter argues that Aquinas's analysis of both kinds of sins diverges much farther from Aristotle's teachings than a casual reading might suggest. According to Aquinas, even a virtuous person can sin

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[4] At least this is the mainstream reading of Aristotle's analysis of *akrasia*. A different one, insisting that Aristotle grants the possibility of "clear-eyed" (or "strict," or "hard") *akrasia* has lately been winning supporters. For a helpful account of both interpretations, see A. W. Price, "Acrasia and Self-Control," in *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's 'Nicomachean Ethics,'* ed. Richard Kraut (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 234–254.

[5] We translate the Latin "*passio*" as "emotion" because the English word "passion," unlike the Latin term, usually denotes only strong emotions.

from weakness. Indeed, even a virtuous person can sin from *malitia.* As virtue does not ensure that one never succumbs to temptation, neither does it ensure that one never engages in willful wrongdoing. A person's good moral disposition inclines her to choose morally good actions but no more. To be sure, Aquinas denies that anyone ever chooses an action because she regards it as bad. He consistently claims that we always will an action "under the aspect of the good" (*sub ratione boni*); but as he interprets this psychological axiom, it does not entail that we choose only actions we regard as morally good, at least at the time that we choose them.

Sins of weakness

In *QDM* Aquinas has to reckon with several different schemes for classifying sins, all of them well entrenched in the Christian tradition. One is a trichotomy between sins of ignorance, sins of weakness, and sins done deliberately (from *malitia* or *industria*). Augustine endorsed the trichotomy; so too did Isidore of Seville. Peter Lombard included Isidore's formulation in his *Sentences,* a theology textbook adopted by all medieval universities.[6] Thus it was one quite familiar to Aquinas and other masters of his time. Augustine, Isidore, and Peter Lombard all agreed that ignorance and weakness are mitigating factors, so that sins of these kinds are less serious than deliberate sins.

A second classificatory scheme, equally well known, distinguishes between venial and mortal sins – that is, between sins God considers pardonable and ones deserving of eternal punishment. It was open to debate whether a sin from weakness must perforce be venial, and whether a sin done deliberately must perforce be mortal. Could a factor other than the agent's state of mind be just as important, perhaps even more important, in determining how serious some particular sin is? It was equally open to debate how sins of weakness differ from sins of ignorance, on the one hand, and sins done deliberately, on the other. Do people who sin out of weakness suffer from some kind of cognitive deficiency, or do they simply lack the will power to do what they know they ought to do?

In *QDM*, q. 2, aa. 6–10, Aquinas sets out a long list of factors that together determine the gravity of a particular sin. In q. 3, which discusses sins from ignorance, from weakness, and from *malitia,* Aquinas focuses

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[6] Augustine, *Quaestiones octoginta tribus*, q. 26 (CCSL 44-A: 32); Isidore, *Sententiae*, II, 17, 3–5 (CCSL 111: 130–131); and Peter Lombard, *Sententiae*, II, d. 22, c. 4, §11 in *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, vol. 1, part 2 (Grottaferrata: Collegium S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 1971), 445.

chiefly on a single factor: the agent's mental state. Having devoted aa. 6–8 to sins of ignorance, he works in aa. 9–11 to clarify how sins of weakness differ from ones of ignorance. In parallel questions of the *Prima secundae* Aquinas usually refers to sins from passion, not sins from weakness.[7] The terminological difference, however, reflects no substantive change. All sins of passion are sins of weakness, and vice versa.[8]

Aquinas argues that a person sins from weakness when she acts under the influence of emotion, so that she recognizes only after the fact, with regret, that she behaved badly.[9] In both respects a sin of weakness differs significantly from a sin from *malitia.* So construed, sins of weakness can never be cases of clear-eyed wrongdoing. In this respect Aquinas's account resembles Aristotle's account of akratic actions.[10] Both highlight the agent's cognitive impairment.

Aquinas's early work places an even heavier emphasis on the agent's cognitive impairment.[11] Consider, for instance, how he describes sins of weakness in *QDV*:

> The will naturally tends toward good as its object. That it sometimes tends to evil does not happen except because the evil is presented to it under the aspect of a good […]. This defect in reason can come to pass in two ways: in one way from reason itself, in the other way from something external [to it] […] Reason fails because of something external when the lower powers, intensely moved to something, interrupt the activity of reason, so that it does not clearly and firmly present to the will its judgment about what is good.[12]

Some of Aquinas's contemporaries thought he denied that people can choose actions they recognize at the time to be wrong. A flurry of protests ensued. Why should we assume that someone choosing to have an extramarital fling suffers from cognitive impairment? A person might believe

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7   *ST* I-II, q. 77, aa. 2–3, 6–8.
8   *QDM*, q. 3, a. 9, c.; *QDM*, q. 3, a. 11, c.; *ST* I-II, q. 77, a. 3, c. While the notion of acting from *infirmitas* (weakness) was standard in Christian theological works, this word virtually never appears in Grosseteste's translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.
9   *QDM*, q. 3, a. 13, c.; *ST* I-II, q. 78, c.
10 *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII, 1146b8–1147b19.
11 This is not to suggest that Aquinas takes a different position in later works, such as *QDM* – only that he takes greater pains to spell out the role of the will.
12 *QDV*, q. 24, a. 8, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.3: 700, ll. 92–121): "Voluntas enim naturaliter tendit in bonum sicut in suum obiectum; quod autem aliquando in malum tendat, hoc non contingit nisi quia malum sibi sub specie boni proponitur […]. Hic autem defectus in ratione, potest dupliciter accidere: uno modo ex ipsa ratione alio modo ex aliquo extrinseco […]. Sed ex aliquo extrinseco ratio deficit, cum propter vires inferiores quae intense moventur in aliquid, intercipitur actus rationis, ut non limpide et firmiter suum iudicium de bono voluntati proponat." Here and below, the translations are our own.

that extramarital sex is a sin, recognize that the activity he is considering would indeed be extramarital sex, and still choose to proceed. The problem lies mainly with the individual's will, critics argued, not with his cognitive faculties. Some masters faulted Aquinas for misinterpreting Aristotle; others claimed that he gave Aristotle's teachings too much weight.[13] Aquinas's work might have had a warmer reception if his critics had focused more on his account of sins from *malitia* and less on his account of sins of weakness.

Even in discussing sins of weakness, though, Aquinas does not simply recycle Aristotle's analysis of *akrasia*. Three differences stand out. First, Aristotle describes *akrasia* as a moral disposition.[14] He treats akratic actions derivatively, as the kind of acts that akratic people are prone to do. In contrast, Aquinas does not regard weakness or incontinence as a moral disposition (*habitus*). While he sometimes refers to "the incontinent," as if this were a type of character, the expression tends to mislead; Aquinas insists that sins of weakness never have their source in the agent's disposition.[15] Someone who sins from weakness is not expressing his character or acting from choice. A sin of weakness arises instead from the agent's emotions.

Second, Aquinas presents sins of weakness, and likewise sins from *malitia*, as ones that even a virtuous person might commit. His conviction that even the best human beings can act "out of character" reflects his own conception of a disposition as something an agent exercises when she *wills*.[16] On a given occasion she might not will to exercise her disposition, might even will to act contrary to it. As a virtuous person might sometimes choose a sinful act, a vicious person might sometimes choose a virtuous one. Aquinas recognizes that Aristotle has a different perspective and rarely suggests otherwise.[17]

Third, Aristotle emphasizes that the akratic does not choose to act as he does: the akratic acts from emotion or nonrational desire (*epithumia*), not rational appetite. In contrast, Aquinas argues that all sins in some

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[13] For later medieval debates about Aristotle's analysis of *akrasia* see Bonnie Kent, *Virtues of the Will: The Transformation of Ethics in the Late Thirteenth Century* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 76–88, 110–143, especially 174–193; Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of the Will in Medieval Thought: From Augustine to Buridan* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 94–193.

[14] *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII, 1150a15–16, 1151a26–28.

[15] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 13, c.; *ST* I-II, q. 78, a. 4, c.

[16] *QDM*, q. 6, c.; *ST* I-II, q. 50, a. 5, c.

[17] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 14, c.; *QDM*, q. 6, c.; *ST* I-II, q. 78, aa. 2–3, c. For Aquinas's interpretation of Aristotle on this topic see Bonnie Kent, "Losable Virtue: Aquinas on Character and Will," in *Aquinas and the 'Nicomachean Ethics,'* ed. Tobias Hoffmann, Jörn Müller, and Matthias Perkams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 91–109.

way involve the rational appetite he calls the will. Hence he describes sins of weakness as ones that a person chooses, in the occurrent or episodic sense, but ones that are not done deliberately, or *from* choice, in the dispositional sense.[18] Aquinas elaborates on what he means by sinning from choice in *QDM*, q. 3, a. 12, in order to clarify the difference between sins of weakness and sins from *malitia*.

How could someone's emotions lead her to choose, even in the occurrent sense, an act she normally considers morally bad? In *QDM*, q. 3, a. 9, Aquinas explains how emotion can cloud the mind. Becoming fixated on the prospect of pleasure, the agent can lose sight of the moral reason *not* to perform the act. Say that she focuses strictly on the prospect of sexual pleasure, losing sight of the fact that sex with a person other than one's spouse is a sin. While she still holds a moral principle prohibiting extramarital sex, she fails to apply it. As Aquinas describes a sin of weakness, the agent does not conclude that it would be good to proceed despite the moral reasons for restraint. She does not weigh the prospect of pleasure against the moral disvalue of the act and make an all-things-considered judgment to go ahead. Instead she loses sight of the act's moral badness, focuses on its pleasure-producing value, and chooses it as good in this sense.[19] Only later, when thinking more clearly, does she recognize that she has done something wrong.

In the same article Aquinas compares sins of weakness with bodily weakness. As the body might fail to operate as it should because of some physical disorder, so the soul might fail to operate as it should because emotions have temporarily impeded the use of reason. The analogy with bodily weakness, combined with his detailed discussion of cognitive impairment, can give the impression that Aquinas is making excuses, and rather poor ones, for ordinary, everyday misbehavior. Does he really believe that the remorseful sinner was too weak to resist temptation? That she could not help but commit adultery, so that her action has roughly the same status as a seizure?

In the very next article – q. 3, a. 10 – Aquinas works to correct erroneous conclusions readers might have drawn. Here we learn that the standard label "sin of weakness" tends to mislead, because Aquinas thinks that psychological weakness differs significantly from physical weakness. Physical weakness can suffice to explain physical failure, as when someone

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[18] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 12, ad 5, ad 11; *ST* I-II, q. 78, a. 4, ad 3.

[19] Focusing myopically on the act's pleasure-producing value, the agent judges and chooses it "as if it were unqualifiedly good"; see *QDV*, q. 26, a. 10, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.3: 784, ll. 189–190): "quasi simpliciter bonum."

tries his utmost to move a piece of furniture but fails because he lacks the necessary strength. Yet neither weakness of will nor the weakness of the soul as a whole suffices to explain moral failure. Someone who sins "from weakness," Aquinas argues, always has the power to resist temptation. He simply fails to exercise it, or to exercise it as fully as he should.

   Peter's repudiation of Christ makes a memorable example. After Christ was taken away to be tried for blasphemy, Peter repeatedly denied that he knew him.[20] Peter's shameful behavior was evidently motivated by fear for his own safety. Aquinas uses this story to argue that sins of weakness, far from being trivial, can sometimes be mortal sins. As he interprets the case, Peter's emotions affected his thinking: they "fettered" his capacity to reason, so that he reached the wrong conclusion about what to do and accordingly made a bad choice. Nevertheless, Aquinas argues, Peter did not suffer from temporary insanity. If he had, there would have been no sin at all in his repudiation of Christ. Peter's denial was a sin precisely because he could have, and should have, resisted the cognitive impairment produced by his own fear. Aquinas concludes:

> It is in the power of the will to eliminate the fettering of reason. The act committed, then, which proceeds from such fettering, is voluntary, and so is not excused from even mortal fault.[21]

When Aquinas discusses *how* we can restrain our emotional impulses, he gives much the same kind of explanation we might hear today from a cognitive therapist. He does not believe that we can restrain our emotional impulses directly. We can, however, take an indirect approach, using the will to control our thinking or to change our physical state. Suppose, for example, that a colleague's casually disparaging comments about women leave me steaming with anger, so that I am sorely tempted to respond with a cutting remark. I might try to imagine how ashamed I would feel later, if I actually said something so mean. Should this approach fail – because I am angry enough to believe the cutting remark one he deserves – I might instead try to imagine something pleasant and unrelated, such as the dinner I plan to have with a friend later on. If mental distraction fails too, I can still try physical distraction, say by clenching my teeth till my jaw aches. Thanks to the power of will, all of these techniques are open to me. If I utter the cutting remark nonetheless, I am in no position to plead that

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[20] Matt. 26:69–75.
[21] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 10, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 89, ll. 68–72): "unde in potestate uoluntatis est quod ligamen rationis excludat. Actus igitur commissus qui ex tali ligamine procedit est uoluntarius, unde non excusatur a culpa etiam mortali."

"I couldn't help myself." As Aquinas sees it, emotion is a mitigating factor, but it never excuses, much less justifies, bad behavior (again, except in cases of temporary insanity).

Why are sins motivated by anger, fear, or some other emotion less serious, other things being equal, than sins done from cool calculation? Because they tend to distort our thinking, making it harder for us to reach the correct judgment and make the right choice. Actions motivated by emotion are simply less within our control than ones chosen without any emotional turmoil. Aquinas distinguishes between degrees of control with reference to the agent's will. On his view, sins of weakness are ones the agent wills, but what leads the agent to commit them is something external to the will itself, namely, emotions of the sensory appetite, a power of the soul directly connected with the body. As a result, such emotions produce bodily changes that color our perception of the particular situation in which we find ourselves.

If human beings were disembodied creatures like angels, we would never experience ordinary emotions or the physical changes associated with them. Sins of weakness would be impossible for us, just as they are for angels.[22] On the bright side, humans are capable of feeling remorse for their sins, and remorse can help people to improve. Moral improvement is impossible for fallen angels.

The example of Peter shows that Aquinas considers sins of weakness less serious than deliberate, dispassionate wrongdoing only *other things being equal.* The qualification is important, for one might think that the agent's mental state should trump all other considerations, so that any sin motivated by emotion must perforce be less serious than one done dispassionately. Aquinas refuses to give the agent's mental state so much weight. As an act motivated by emotion can be a mortal sin, so an act done from choice can be a venial sin. Deliberately taking someone else's property, for instance, is in general a mortal sin; but Aquinas contends that it would be only a venial sin if what one takes has little or no value. In a similar vein, envy is generally a mortal sin, but it can be a venial sin if we feel envy only about something trivial, as we do when somebody beats us in a game.[23]

Adultery in the heart

The case of the envious loser brings us to an aspect of Aquinas's account more problematic than the ones already examined. When Aquinas and

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[22] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 5, c.   [23] *QDM*, q. 12, a. 3, c.; *QDM*, q. 10, a. 2, c.

his contemporaries discuss "acts," their chief concern is with *mental* acts, or what they call "internal" acts. Physical acts are of secondary concern because they are less within our control. For instance, we might choose to commit a murder but fail to carry it off because we never get the opportunity. Instead our intended target dies of heart failure or moves to Timbuktu. Our choice to kill him is a mortal sin nonetheless. Sins of weakness, however, include more than choices motivated by emotion and the physical acts resulting from them. They can also include the emotions themselves. Thus I might resist the impulse to take a swing at a colleague, even resist the impulse to make a cutting remark, and still be guilty of sin just for feeling angry at him, or for dwelling with pleasure on the thought of wringing his neck.

Of course, some philosophers argue that we cannot be blamed for our emotions, because we cannot help what we feel. If my emotions incline me toward bad behavior but I manage to resist, so that I decide not to act on them, one might claim that I actually deserve more moral credit than someone who did not need to struggle against temptation. The obvious drawback to this position, from the perspective of Aquinas and his contemporaries, is that it seems directly opposed to scripture. If emotions are blameless, why does God's law prohibit not only stealing but also *coveting* anything belonging to our neighbors?[24] The Sermon on the Mount could even be taken as decisive evidence that we are morally responsible for our emotions. Christ gives more than one example:

> You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not murder"; and "whoever murders shall be liable to judgment." But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment [...]. You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.[25]

Aquinas's works give careful consideration to both the nature of emotions and their moral status. He argues that basic emotions like anger and fear – considered in themselves, as reactions of the sensory appetite – are neither good nor bad. We are not praised or blamed just for having them. Yet we are praised for emotions in accord with reason and blamed for ones contrary to reason, a lesson Aquinas believes is taught by Aristotle as well as by scripture. Furthermore, some emotions are not just basic affective reactions similar to the one that animals have. Envy, for instance, is not merely sadness; it is sadness *about someone else's good*. The specific

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[24] Ex. 20:17.   [25] Matt. 5:21–22, 27–28.

(intentional) object of envy distinguishes it from other kinds of sadness. While other kinds are in themselves morally neutral, envy is a kind of sadness that constitutes a sin.[26]

Here one might object that our emotional reactions are sometimes feelings we do not choose to have and can do nothing to prevent. We often feel angry when criticized, even though the criticism is justified. We often envy someone for an award she won, even though she richly deserved it. Does every emotion that runs counter to reason qualify as a sin of weakness? Aquinas's response distinguishes between three kinds of inappropriate emotions: "first movements" of the sensory appetite that we resist, responses produced by what we ourselves choose to do (or even think about), and responses we could have prevented but failed to prevent.[27] By "first movement" Aquinas means spontaneous reactions rooted in the body, such as a feeling of sexual desire triggered by a pornographic photo. If we resist the feeling – say, by looking away and deciding not to dwell on our memory of the photo – we cannot be faulted. Cases like these, however, are comparatively rare. Aquinas thinks that most of our emotional responses are within our own control. Sometimes they reflect bad judgment and a bad will, as when I envy someone's success because I myself want the limelight and think that the praise given to her makes me look bad by comparison. Many other responses, though, belong to Aquinas's large third category: emotional reactions preceding rational judgment that we could have prevented but failed to prevent.

Say, for example, that I feel a rush of anger at being criticized by a friend. I have not considered the possible grounds for his criticism and judged it unfair. I have reacted without deliberating, so that my emotional response reflects no rational assessment of the criticism's merits. I just feel hurt and want to retaliate. Since my anger precedes any rational judgment, Aquinas does not regard it as a mortal sin; yet he does regard it as a venial sin if it lasts more than a moment. On his view, I have the power to change my emotional state by redirecting my mental attention – say, to reasons why the criticism might be justified, or to my friend's good intentions in offering it. What holds for anger also holds for lust. I may not be able to prevent a feeling of lust upon seeing a pornographic photo, but I do have the power to look at, and think about, something else. If I fail to exercise such control, Aquinas contends, I have committed a sin

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[26] *ST* I-II, q. 24, a. 1, c. and ad 3; *QDM*, q. 10, a. 1, c., ad 1; See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, II, 1105b33–1106a1.

[27] *QDM*, q. 7, a. 6, c., ad 6, ad 8.

of weakness – one less serious than many other sins I might commit, especially those harmful to others, but a sin nonetheless.[28]

Willful wrongdoing

In *QDM*, q. 3, aa. 12–15, Aquinas turns his attention to *malitia*, the source of the gravest and most willful wrongdoing. *Malitia* is the source of sin on the part of the agent's will; the resulting actions are knowing, deliberate, and supremely culpable. While English translators often call such sins sins from "malice," this translation does more to confuse than to clarify.[29] Though truly malicious actions, like torture, can be sins from *malitia*, more mundane actions, like lying, overeating, and extramarital sex can be sins from *malitia* as well. Regrettably, other plausible translations, such as sins "from evil" or "from wickedness," have a different drawback. Both can lead one to think that the agent has a disposition to sin – that he is a generally evil or wicked person – and this might not be the case. What Aquinas classifies as sins from *malitia* can come from a vicious disposition, but they can also come from a merely occurrent mental state. To sin from *malitia*, then, is not to do a particular kind of morally bad thing, nor need it be the expression of a morally bad character. It is rather to do a morally bad thing in a particular way: deliberately, decisively, and without subsequent remorse. The person who sins from *malitia* chooses to engage in willful wrongdoing, doing what she knows is morally bad without either emotion or ignorance as a mitigating factor.

One significant challenge facing the reader of this portion of *QDM* has gone largely unnoticed. In the four articles Aquinas devotes to willful wrongdoing, we find two very different, and seemingly incompatible, stories about what such wrongdoing amounts to.[30] The first is broadly

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[28] There is a vast literature on Aquinas's account of emotions. Recent contributions include: Peter King, "Aquinas on the Passions," in *Aquinas's Moral Theory: Essays in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*, ed. Scott MacDonald and Eleonore Stump (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 101–132; Claudia Eisen Murphy, "Aquinas on Responsibility for Our Emotions," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 8 (1999): 163–205; Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions: A Study of 'Summa Theologiae' 1a2ae 22–48* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Nicholas E. Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011).

[29] Sins from *malitia* are called sins from malice in many places, including the English Dominican and Blackfriars translations of the *ST* and both Jean Oesterle's and Richard Regan's translations of *QDM*.

[30] Some authors have acknowledged that Aquinas presents two ways in which someone can sin from *malitia* without noting the tension between the two accounts; see Colleen McCluskey, "Willful

Aristotelian: in the bodies of aa. 12 and 13, Aquinas identifies instances of willful wrongdoing with actions from vice. The second is emphatically Christian: in aa. 14 and 15, Aquinas calls sins against the Holy Spirit sins from *malitia* as well.[31] Sins against the Holy Spirit, however, do not proceed from vices. To understand Aquinas's account of willful wrongdoing we need to examine these two stories and clarify the relationship between them.

Aquinas's first characterization of willful wrongdoing addresses the question, "Is it possible for someone to sin from *malitia* or certain knowledge (*certa scientia*)?" He responds:

> As [Aristotle] says in Book III of the *Ethics,* […] it is unreasonable to say that someone wills to commit adultery and does not will to be unjust. The explanation for this is that something is called voluntary not only if the will is moved to it primarily and per se*,* as it is to an end, but also if it is moved to it for the sake of an end […]. If, therefore, it happens that someone wills so much to enjoy some pleasure, adultery or some such desirable thing, that the person does not shrink from incurring the deformity of sin, which he perceives to be conjoined to what he wills, he is said to will not only that good he principally wills but also the deformity itself, which he chooses to suffer in order that he not be deprived of the desired good.[32]

Here Aquinas explains how willful wrongdoing is compatible with his well-known position that the will always aims at some perceived good. So long as the wrongdoer desires some good, like pleasure, so much that she is willing to do what she sees is bad in order to attain it, there is a sense in which she wills even the deformity that attends her action. Even the willful

Wrongdoing: Thomas Aquinas on *certa malitia*," *Studies in the History of Ethics* 6 (2005): 1–54, at 13–15; McCluskey, "Thomas Aquinas and the Epistemology of Moral Wrongdoing," in *Handlung und Wissenschaft: Die Epistemologie der praktischen Wissenschaften im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert*, ed. Matthias Lutz-Bachmann and Alexander Fidora (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008), 107–122, at 117–121; Terence Irwin, *The Development of Ethics: A Historical and Critical Study*, *Volume 1: From Socrates to the Reformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 539–541.

[31] In his *Sentences* commentary and the *ST*, Aquinas adds that actions which *follow from* sins against the Holy Spirit (e.g., from despair or obstinacy) are sins from *malitia* as well. See *In Sent* II, d. 43, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1 and ad 3; *ST* I-II, q. 78, a. 3.

[32] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 12, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 92, ll. 117–138): "sicut Philosophus dicit in III Ethicorum, […] irrationabile est dicere quod aliquis uelit adulterium committere et non uelit esse iniustus. Cuius ratio est, quia uoluntarium dicitur aliquid non solum si uoluntas feratur in illud primo et per se sicut in finem, set etiam si feratur in illud ut ad finem […]. Si ergo contingat quod aliquis in tantum uelit aliqua delectatione frui, puta adulterio uel quocumque huiusmodi appetibili, ut non refugiat incurrere deformitatem peccati quam percipit esse coniunctam ei quod uult, non solum dicetur uelle illud bonum quod principaliter uult, set etiam ipsam deformitatem, quam pati eligit ne bono cupito priuetur." See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 1114a11–14.

wrongdoer aims at a good when she acts, though she aims at one that she herself realizes is joined to a moral evil.[33]

It may strike us odd that Aquinas appeals to Aristotle in arguing that willful wrongdoing is possible, for it is hardly evident that Aristotle thinks that it is. In the chapter of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aquinas cites, Aristotle declares it unreasonable to suppose that people who voluntarily and repeatedly do unjust actions acquire unjust characters *in*voluntarily; but nothing in this chapter commits Aristotle to the view that such people know that their acts are unjust when they do them.[34] How could this discussion contribute to Aquinas's argument that people can sin knowingly?

Aquinas's commentary on the *Ethics* might provide insight into his reason for citing the passage.[35] Here he takes Aristotle to hold that those who will unjust deeds are voluntarily unjust when they do the sort of things that they foresee will produce an unjust character. Aquinas does not attribute to Aristotle the view that such people engage in clear-eyed wrongdoing. Rather, he takes the passage as an example of someone who willingly endures a bad consequence for the sake of some desired good. The person who repeatedly does unjust acts would rather develop an unjust character than avoid such actions. Aquinas illustrates the point with an example of someone who wants to walk when it is hot, foreseeing that she will perspire. While she does not wish to perspire per se, she would rather perspire than forego her walk. The willful wrongdoer, like the person who voluntarily becomes unjust, does something with a bad consequence she foresees, for the sake of some good she would rather not forego.

The analogy in Aquinas's *Ethics* commentary mirrors those he uses in other works to illustrate the willful wrongdoer's state of mind. In the *Prima secundae* he compares the willful wrongdoer to a person who allows a limb to be amputated in order to preserve her life.[36] In *QDM* he compares the willful wrongdoer to: (1) a sick person who takes bitter medicine to attain health, (2) a merchant who jettisons cargo to save the ship, and (3) a man who voluntarily submits himself to harsh servitude to be with a woman he loves.[37] Each of these characters incurs a foreseen evil in order

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[33] Aquinas defends the position that the will always aims at a good in the face of objections suggesting that this position is incompatible with willful wrongdoing. For examples see his replies to objections 1, 2, 4, 6, and 10 in *QDM*, q. 3, a. 12.

[34] *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 1113b15–1115a2.

[35] *In NE*, III, l. 12 (*Editio Leonina*, XLVII: 153–154, ll. 83–96).

[36] As Aquinas explains, the willful wrongdoer "loves some temporal good, such as riches or pleasure, more than the order of reason, or divine law, or the charity of God, or some such thing." Thus "the person is willing to suffer the loss (*velit dispendium pati*) of some spiritual good in order to obtain some temporal good"; *ST* I-II, q. 78, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, VII: 71).

[37] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 12. c.

to obtain a good he considered to be more important. Aquinas's analogies suggest that the willful wrongdoer does what is morally bad because he cares more about pleasure or some other good than he does about moral rectitude.

Aristotle considers actions like the merchant's mixed: in some ways voluntary, in others involuntary. Aquinas contends that such actions are, in context, entirely voluntary.[38] While the merchant does not desire to jettison cargo per se, she does will to jettison it given the circumstances. Aquinas frequently uses all of the analogies above as examples of actions undesirable in their own right but voluntarily performed for the sake of desired ends.[39] The willful wrongdoer is like the characters in these analogies because she does something she would not do for its own sake (she incurs an evil) for the sake of some good she strongly desires.

Aquinas's analogies may appear to suggest that the willful wrongdoer's actions, though voluntary, are reluctant. After all, the characters in the analogies only incur an evil because they believe they must do so to attain a good they desire. They would clearly prefer to attain that good without incurring any evil at all. Does Aquinas think that the same holds for the willful wrongdoer? The idea that willful wrongdoers act reluctantly would raise at least two problems. First, it would suggest that Aquinas has no place in his moral psychology for people who do what is wrong knowingly *and* gladly. Second, it would conflict with his own pronouncements about vice. Aquinas often claims, following Aristotle, that the vicious person acts gladly and without remorse; but as we will see, he also claims that actions from vice are sins from *malitia*. If sins from *malitia* are reluctant, then actions from vice would be reluctant as well.

In the *Prima secundae* Aquinas does suggest that the willful wrongdoer would prefer to attain his intended end without sinning.[40] However, we need not take this to mean that the person acts reluctantly. In his commentary on Job, Aquinas explains that someone can rejoice over taking even bitter medicine because of her hope for health.[41] In other words, the person who desires her health strongly enough can take her medicine decisively and gladly, even while realizing it is bitter and wishing it were not. By the same token, the willful wrongdoer can come to desire some good so strongly that she sins decisively and gladly, even while recognizing

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[38] *In NE*, III, l. 1 (*Editio Leonina*, XLVII: 119, ll. 142–154); *ST* I, q. 113, a. 7, c.
[39] See *SCG* III, c. 5–6; *In Job*, c.1; *ST* II-II, q. 64, a. 3.   [40] *ST* I-II, q. 78, a. 1, ad 2.
[41] *In Job*, c. 1.

that her action is a sin and wishing it were not. At least Aquinas believes this holds for some cases of willful wrongdoing.

   Of course, there is a way in which the willful wrongdoer errs: she does not recognize that the good she pursues is not worth the evil she incurs in acting. Though Aquinas denies that sins from *malitia* are motivated by ignorance, he does think that they involve ignorance, as all sins do. Someone who sins from weakness does not know when she chooses the act that it is morally bad. Someone who sins from *malitia* knows full well that the act is morally bad, but she weighs its moral badness against the gain she anticipates and reaches the erroneous conclusion that it is still in her interests to do it, all things considered.[42] According to Aquinas, a person's will, the source of willful wrongdoing, is an appetite for the ultimate end. When the person's will does not aim at her true ultimate end, she is prone to overvalue, and therefore pursue, merely temporal goods.

Sins from vice

In q. 3, a. 12, Aquinas explains that the willful wrongdoer's will can come to aim at the wrong good on account of a bad disposition (*habitus*) – a vice. When a person has a vice, "then the will by its own movement, without some emotion, is inclined to that good; and this is what it is to sin from choice, either on purpose, or from certain knowledge or likewise from *malitia*."[43] This article suggests that vices lead to willful wrongdoing, and do so because they incline the will toward the wrong good. Indeed, both articles 12 and 13 appear to suggest that (1) vices lead to willful wrongdoing, and (2) *only* vices lead to willful wrongdoing. Aquinas even seems to identify sins from *malitia* with actions from vice.[44] Following Aristotle, he claims that an agent's disposition is a sort of second nature: acting in accordance with a disposition comes naturally and easily, while acting against it is difficult.[45] Aquinas adds that the vicious agent's will tends toward sin "in virtue of its own form [...], as when a stone falls downward."[46] Vicious agents tend toward sin because vices move them toward some temporal good, such as pleasure, rather than toward God. This

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[42] See *ST* I-II, q. 78, a. 4 and *QDM*, q. 3, a. 13.

[43] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 12, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 92, ll. 162–165): "et tunc ex se proprio motu absque aliqua passione inclinatur in illud. Et hoc est peccare ex electione siue ex industria aut ex certa scientia aut etiam ex malitia."

[44] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 12, ad 5; *QDM*, q. 3, a. 13, c.

[45] See also *ST* I-II, q. 78, a. 2, c.; *QDVCom*, q. 1, a. 8, ad 16.

[46] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 12, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 92, ll. 153–155): "per formam propriam [...], sicut cum lapis cadit deorsum."

makes overweighting that temporal good, and thereby sinning, natural and easy for them.

While Aquinas's account of vice may be broadly Aristotelian, his suggestion that vices lead to willful wrongdoing represents an important departure from Aristotle. It is not obvious that Aristotle has, or can have, an account of willful wrongdoing. In fact, Book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics* indicates that vices are a source of *unwitting* wrongdoing. Explaining how the vicious person differs from the morally weak person, Aristotle declares that "vice is unconscious of itself."[47] On Aquinas's account, by contrast, vices are one source of willful, and therefore conscious and clear-eyed, wrongdoing.

Sins against the Holy Spirit

In the *ST,* where Aquinas frames issues and organizes them according to his own preferences, two articles capture clearly and concisely his limited agreement with Aristotle about sins from *malitia.* The first asks whether everyone who sins from a disposition sins from *malitia.*[48] Deferring to Aristotle, Aquinas answers in the affirmative; but he hastens to add, contra Aristotle, that someone with a vicious disposition need not always be exercising it. The agent might sin from ignorance of some salient fact, or she might sin from weakness, because her emotions have impaired her judgment. (Even people with bad characters are not fairy-tale villains, coolly calculating their every action.) Moving even farther from Aristotle, Aquinas argues that someone with a vicious disposition might occasionally perform a morally good act. For Aquinas this means choosing it for the right reason, not merely doing some physical act that human observers take to be praiseworthy.

The next article asks whether everyone who sins from *malitia* sins from a disposition.[49] One of the opening arguments, drawn from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics,* says yes: an unjust action, done as an unjust person does it, is an act from choice, and an act from choice must perforce come from the agent's disposition. Aquinas himself argues that the answer is no: someone without a vicious disposition can sin from *malitia.* Indeed, anyone can sin from *malitia.* A vicious disposition only makes it easier and more pleasurable to engage in deliberate wrongdoing.[50]

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[47] *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII, 1150b29–1151a5.   [48] *ST* I–II, q. 78, a. 2.   [49] *ST* I–II, q. 78, a. 3.
[50] *ST* I–II, q. 78, a. 3, c. and ad 1.

In *QDM,* where the framing of issues and the organizational scheme run more along conventional lines,[51] readers must contend with a more jarring transition. After q. 3, aa. 12–13 (the two aforementioned quasi-Aristotelian articles focused on the link between willful wrongdoing and vice), Aquinas suddenly shifts in a. 14 to "sins against the Holy Spirit." According to the Christian tradition, sins against the Holy Spirit are the gravest of all sins. There is nothing in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* even roughly approximating them.

Aquinas thinks that a person sins against the Holy Spirit when she casts aside some God-given disposition meant to deter her from acting immorally. He has six specific gifts in mind: hope of eternal life, fear of God, acknowledgment of the truth, inward grace, shame, and consideration of the smallness of the good gained through sin. These are all gifts of grace to believing Christians, and each helps the person avoid sinning. A person casts aside these gifts through six sins (respectively): despair, presumption, attacking the known truth, envy of a brother's grace, impenitence, and obstinacy.[52] Since only Christians can have the gifts in question, only Christians are capable of this gravest wrongdoing.

One reason for the gravity of these acts is the ingratitude they involve. While Aquinas thinks it uncommon for those who have received God's grace to engage in willful wrongdoing, he makes it clear that when they do, they sin most seriously.[53] Furthermore, among Christians with grace, people under religious vows are capable of sinning more seriously than anyone else.[54] When they sin willfully and from contempt, their actions imply supreme ingratitude to God; for they have been given every aid to avoid morally bad actions and have chosen them anyway.

In both his *Sentences* commentary and the *ST*, Aquinas suggests that it is possible, though unlikely, for someone to sin against the Holy Spirit in her first act of sin. In the *Sentences* commentary he illustrates, explaining that someone who has not yet sinned might reject hope for union with God in heaven after considering different human conditions and noticing the pleasurable lives led by those who do not have such hope.[55] Hence, it is not only the case that the person who sins against the Holy Spirit need not be vicious: she may even be virtuous when she acts. Since full-fledged

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[51] For example, in *QDM*, qq. 8–15, Aquinas expatiates on the seven capital sins (or vices), presenting them in the same order that Gregory the Great did. The *ST* gives much less attention to this way of thinking about sins. Aquinas organizes the *Secunda secundae* around virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit, presenting vices and sins in connection with whatever good dispositions they oppose. He also argues, contrary to Gregory, that lust is a more serious failing than anger (*ST* II-II, q. 158, a. 4, c.; *QDM*, q. 12, a. 4, c.).

[52] *In Sent* II, d. 43, q. 1, a. 3; *ST* II-II, q. 14, a. 2.   [53] *In Heb*, c. 10, l. 3.   [54] *ST* II-II, q. 186, a. 10.

[55] *In Sent* II, d. 43, q. 1, a. 5; *ST* II-II, q. 14, a. 4.

hope is a virtue infused by God together with faith, charity, and the cardinal virtues, it is difficult to see how someone who is not virtuous could cast such hope aside.

Because sins against the Holy Spirit are not sins from vice, the account of willful wrongdoing given in *QDM*, q. 3, aa. 12–13 needs to be broadened. This is precisely what Aquinas does in a. 14. He explains that a person sins from *malitia* when his will is inclined to a good connected with an evil, but the inclination can come about in two different ways:

> Sometimes the will is itself moved toward a good of this kind through its own inclination, coming from an acquired disposition; but sometimes [it is moved] through the removal of what was keeping it from sin, such as hope and fear of God and other gifts of the Holy Spirit that restrain a person from sin. So, strictly speaking, that person sins against the Holy Spirit whose will tends to sin because he casts aside such restraints of the Holy Spirit. For this reason despair, presumption, obstinacy, and the like are considered species of sins against the Holy Spirit […].[56]

All instances of willful wrongdoing, then, proceed from a will that is itself inclined (i.e. is not inclined on account of ignorance or weakness) to a good connected to a sin, like the pleasure involved in adultery. And the will can become inclined toward a good of this kind not only on account of an acquired disposition, a vice, but also on account of the person's choice to cast aside some gift of the Holy Spirit.

Elsewhere in this same article, Aquinas explains that the latter person's will moves toward sin in the way that "water pours out of a broken vase."[57] Recall that the vicious person's will moves toward sin as if naturally, in the way that a heavy object moves toward the earth. The rejection of a gift of the Holy Spirit, like hope or fear, does not make a certain sort of sin seem natural, but it does destroy the relationship the agent had to God, who gave her those dispositions to curb impulses to sin. Like the vicious person, the person who sins against the Holy Spirit moves toward temporal goods. However, she differs from the vicious person in that she turns her will primarily away

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[56] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 14, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 98, ll. 226–237): "Sic ergo uoluntas quandoque fertur per se in huiusmodi bonum ex propria inclinatione habitus acquisiti, quandoque uero ex remotione eius quod prohibebat a peccato, sicut spes, timor Dei, et alia huiusmodi dona Spiritus Sancti quibus homo retrahitur a peccato. Unde proprie ille peccat in Spiritum Santum cuius uoluntas ex hoc tendit in peccatum quia abicit huiusmodi Spiritus Sancti retinacula. Propter quod et desperatio et presumptio et obstinatio et huiusmodi ponuntur species peccati in Spiritum Sanctum."

[57] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 14, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 98, l. 226): "sicut aqua effunditur fracto uase."

from God and only secondarily toward those goods. In the *Secunda secundae* Aquinas explains that sins like despair, which consist principally in aversion from God, "imply conversion to a mutable good, in so far as the soul deserting from God, must necessarily turn to other things."[58]

Sins against the Holy Spirit are attributed to the will rather than the sensory appetite or intellect because the wrongdoer casts aside gifts of the Holy Spirit, like hope and fear, on account of the sheer strength of her desire to be free from God's constraints. Like a patient with scoliosis rejecting a cumbersome, though necessary, back brace, the person who sins against the Holy Spirit decides that she would rather live without the burdensome constraints she associates with obedience to God. She rejects divine gifts that serve to keep her from sinning in order to act more freely.

The hope Aquinas has in mind is not the emotion by which people hope for earthly goods, but the virtue of hope, which inclines people to hope for eternal happiness, their true ultimate end.[59] Similarly, the despair Aquinas has in mind is not the emotion of despair, which in itself is not something bad. The emotion can even be good when it inclines people to abandon the foolish pursuit of goods they can never attain. The kind of despair Aquinas considers a sin is very different. It comes from rejecting hope for eternal happiness, a good God promises that one can attain with the help of grace. Someone who despairs instead adopts the attitude that no matter how well she acts, she will never attain such happiness.[60] Aquinas argues that the person who takes this attitude has not made a simple intellectual error. The sin of despair consists in adopting an attitude of contempt for the very hope that helps people persist in pursuing spiritual goods, despite all the difficulties.[61] Thus the person who sins against the Holy Spirit does not passively lose, but rather willfully casts aside, a God-given disposition she has come to regard with disdain.

One might wonder whether this is an intelligible way to think about states like despair. Can someone really despair willfully and contemptuously? While Aquinas does not say nearly as much as we might like about this topic, the general notion need not be implausible. Recall the example from his

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[58] *ST* II-II, q. 20, a. 1, ad 1 (*Editio Leonina*, 8: 151): "important conversionem ad bonum commutabile, inquantum anima deserens Deum consequenter necesse est quod ad alia convertatur."

[59] On the virtue of hope, see *ST* II-II, qq. 17–18.

[60] In the *ST* Aquinas says the person who despairs believes something like: "[God] refuses pardon to the repentant sinner, or that He does not turn sinners to Himself by sanctifying grace"; see *ST* II-II, q. 20, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, 8: 151): "peccatori poenitenti veniam deneget, vel quod peccatores ad se non convertat per gratiam iustificantem."

[61] *ST* II-II, q. 14, a. 2, ad 1. See also *QDM*, q. 3, a. 14, ad 6.

Sentences commentary: a sinless person who despairs after noticing the pleasurable lives led by those who do not hope for union with God in the afterlife. The life led by a Christian with hope requires that she limit or forego many pleasant worldly pursuits – idle gossip, gluttonous eating, extramarital sex, and so on – all for the comparatively distant good of heavenly happiness. If someone who ordinarily foregoes such pleasures begins to attend to the lives some non-Christians are leading, she may start to feel contempt for her own lifestyle and its many constraints. Fueled by this contempt, along with a growing desire for more immediate pleasures, she begins to think, "God will never let me into heaven anyway. Why should it matter what I do?" This new mindset is one of despair, but a despair triggered by contempt and desire, not passive intellectual error.

To recap, sins against the Holy Spirit are instances of willful wrongdoing because they result when the will turns away from the agent's true end without the mitigating influence of passion or ignorance. They are especially serious, however, because the person who sins against the Holy Spirit turns directly and contemptuously away from God and only consequently toward other, temporal, goods. This differentiates her from the person who sins from vice.

Why two stories?

Since both actions from vice and sins against the Holy Spirit are instances of willful wrongdoing, one might have expected Aquinas to mention sins against the Holy Spirit at the outset, when he begins discussing sins from *malitia*. Because he does not, Aquinas appears to prioritize the link between willful wrongdoing and vice. He seems to regard vicious actions as paradigmatic instances of willful wrongdoing.

However, this appearance is likely illusory. In *QDM*, q, 3, aa. 14–15, Aquinas identifies another difference between vices and sins against the Holy Spirit which can account for the order in which he treats them. Here Aquinas explains that vice is "a kind of circumstance of sin which can be found in every genus of sin."[62] In other words, to sin from vice is not to commit a particular kind of sin but to commit any sin in a particular way. Similarly, to sin from weakness or ignorance is not to commit particular kinds of sin but to commit any sin in a particular way. Either homicide or adultery, for

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[62] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 14, ad 2 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 99, ll. 262–264): "quedam peccati circumstantia que potest in quolibet genere peccati inueniri."

instance, can be committed from ignorance, weakness, or *malitia,* depending on the wrongdoer's state of mind. Thus it makes sense for Aquinas to treat vice just after treating ignorance and passion. Ignorance, passion, and vice each denote a way of sinning rather than a specific subset of sins.

Sins against the Holy Spirit, by contrast, *are* a specific subset of sins, ones that can be committed only by Christians with grace. As Aquinas describes them, such sins do not arise directly from ignorance, emotion, or vice. They are acts of willful contempt. Although a sin against the Holy Spirit might be preceded by other sins, Aquinas insists on the possibility that it is the agent's very first sin, on account of freedom of choice.[63] For this reason, in contrast with sins from vice, Aquinas says that sins against the Holy Spirit can be considered "a special genus of sin."[64]

In sum, we need not think Aquinas intends to demote sins against the Holy Spirit when he chooses to treat them only after treating actions from vice. These are not less interesting, important, or serious instances of willful wrongdoing, but they *are* outliers. They are a specific subset of sins, committed only by Christians. Other sins have their source in ignorance, emotion, or a vicious disposition.

Conclusion

Aquinas follows Aristotle's account of *akrasia* in claiming that someone who sins from weakness acts with a mind clouded by emotion. The agent does not recognize until afterward that she has done something wrong. Aquinas diverges from Aristotle's account mainly in arguing that anyone, even a virtuous person, can sin from weakness. Readers must turn to Aquinas's discussion of sins from *malitia* to see how he explains willful, unrepentant wrongdoing.

In presenting two accounts of willful wrongdoing, Aquinas works to connect the gravest actions according to Aristotle, actions from vice, with the gravest actions according to the Christian tradition. He argues that there are two ways in which the will can be disordered, and so two types of willful wrongdoing. Both sins from vice and sins against the Holy Spirit proceed from the will's turning away from the true ultimate end. Unlike Aristotle, Aquinas describes sins from vice as cases where the agent recognizes that her action is morally bad but chooses it nonetheless, in order to

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[63] *ST* II-II, q. 14, a. 4, c.
[64] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 14, ad 2 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 99, ll. 256–257): "speciale genus peccati."

obtain a temporal good that she values more highly than moral rectitude. Somebody who sins against the Holy Spirit, from Aquinas's perspective, is even worse. For someone who sins against the Holy Spirit temporal goods are a secondary consideration. The person acts primarily to avoid the efforts and constraints associated with obedience to God.

Free choice

Tobias Hoffmann and Peter Furlong

The *QDM* is highly significant for Aquinas's account of free choice (*liberum arbitrium*), that is, the kind of freedom which is necessary for moral responsibility. For one, they contain Aquinas's most mature *ex professo* treatment of free choice (q. 6).[1] Furthermore, free choice, voluntariness, and the role of the will in free agency are central in various articles that discuss the origin of moral evil in a freely deficient will, most importantly under these headings: the good as the cause of evil (q. 1, a. 3), the distinction between evil of sin and evil of punishment (q. 1, aa. 4–5), sins of omission and commission in general (q. 2, aa. 1–3), and God and the devil as external causes of human acts of sin (q. 3, aa. 2–3). Finally, Aquinas's treatment of angelic sin provides important insights into his theory of the interaction of intellect and will in acts of free choice (q. 16, aa. 2–5). Many of these issues are treated in more detail in the *QDM* than elsewhere.

We will first examine how Aquinas describes the necessary conditions for moral responsibility. Next we will present his moral psychology of free choice, that is, his account of how acts of free choice are caused by the intellect and the will. Then we will argue that in the *QDM* he proposes an account of free choice as incompatible with determinism. Last, we will show that Aquinas's account of the fall of the angels confirms our interpretation.[2]

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[1] We would like to thank Therese Scarpelli Cory, Francis Feingold, and Cyrille Michon for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this chapter. *QDM*, q. 6 is undoubtedly Aquinas's latest treatment of free choice. It is debated, however, whether in *QDM*, q. 6 Aquinas gives a more "voluntarist" account of free choice than in earlier works, that is, whether he grants the will a greater independence from the intellect. Daniel Westberg makes a good case for constancy in Aquinas's treatments of free choice; see his "Did Aquinas Change His Mind about the Will?" *The Thomist* 58 (1994): 41–60.

[2] For more comprehensive discussions of Aquinas's account of free choice, see Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003), 277–306; Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of 'Summa theologiae' Ia 75–89* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 200–264.

Sourcehood and the ability to do otherwise

This chapter discusses the kind of freedom that is necessary for moral responsibility. To be free in this sense is to have the kind of control over one's actions that is necessary for receiving praise or blame. Do we have such freedom? In contemporary philosophy, the debate is framed in terms of "free will"; for Aquinas, the issue concerns *libera electio* (free choice as an occurrent act) or *liberum arbitrium* (free choice as the power to act freely).[3] Notice, however, that in Aquinas "free will" (*libera voluntas*) is taken in a broader sense than "free choice" (*libera electio; liberum arbitrium*). For example, concerning our ultimate end (i.e., happiness), which we desire by natural necessity, we have free will, but not free choice. We desire it by free will, because the will is not externally coerced; we do not desire it by free choice, however, because it is not up to us whether or not we desire it.[4]

For Aquinas, free choice presupposes two conditions that also play a great role in the contemporary free will debate: sourcehood and the ability to do otherwise (access to alternative possibilities). But in his view, these are not two independent conditions. Rather, he distinguishes between degrees of sourcehood that imply different ways of lacking or having the ability to do otherwise. For this, we have to look at his account of voluntariness in the *ST* and *QDV* as well as his treatment of sin in the *QDM*.[5]

Free acts must spring from a source that is internal to the agent. Aquinas distinguishes three levels at which a source (*principium*) of movement can be internal. At the first level, the source of movement is internal to the thing. But the source of the thing's end, that is, of the goal where its movement is directed, is not internal to the thing. If not stopped, a rock moves downward by itself – and by itself, the rock only moves downward, not upward. At the second level, not only is the source of movement internal, but so too is the source of moving to this or that end. This requires knowledge of the end. An animal moves toward food upon

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[3] We translate both *libera electio* and *liberum arbitrium* as free choice. *Arbitrium* is the decision of an arbitrator; see Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 151. So, in its original meaning, *liberum arbitrium* is an occurrent act; but medieval thinkers made it a term of art the definition of which they debated. Aquinas understands it as a power, not as an act (*ST* I, q. 83, a. 2).

[4] *QDV*, q. 24, a. 1, ad 20; *ST* I, q. 82, a. 1, ad 1.

[5] Strictly speaking, "sin" (*peccatum*) means only that something is happening differently from how it should. In this sense, limping is a sin, for it is a deviation from the way in which one is meant to walk. But, as Aquinas remarks, "sin" is commonly used as a synonym for "fault" (*culpa*), which additionally implies that the act is voluntary and that its deficiency is imputable to the agent. See *QDM*, q. 2, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 33, ll. 128–142); cf. *ST* I-II, q. 21, a. 2.

perception of the food, and so it itself gives direction to its movement. At this second level we find what Aquinas calls "voluntariness in the imperfect sense." At the third level, there is knowledge not only of the end, but also of the end qua end, as well as of the way in which things conducive to the end relate to the end. This requires not merely sensory knowledge, but rational knowledge. It allows for practical deliberation and it opens the possibility of pursuing the end in different ways, and even of desisting from its pursuit. Aquinas calls this third level "voluntariness in the perfect sense."[6] We will dub it "perfect sourcehood."

According to Aquinas, for moral responsibility, sourcehood at the first level, that is, the mere fact that the source of our action is internal, is clearly not sufficient. A fever may cause us to do or omit something, but, as a non-voluntary internal source, it cannot ground moral responsibility any more than a purely external source can.[7] Nor is sourcehood at the second level sufficient for moral responsibility, as we will see in more detail later in this chapter. Only perfect sourcehood grounds moral responsibility,[8] and perfect sourcehood is required for free choice (*liberum arbitrium*).[9]

Perfect sourcehood does not build on the first and second level of sourcehood merely by adding that the action is non-necessary (contingent); that is, it does not merely open up alternative possibilities. In fact, contingency is already found on the first two levels. The falling of a rock is in some sense contingent (although it is necessary given the concrete circumstances in which a rock actually falls). And indeed our action or non-action may be contingent because a falling rock injures us and impedes us from doing our duty. Since this is beyond our control, there is no moral responsibility in such a case.[10] Nonhuman animals, moreover, possess a limited kind of ability to do otherwise. A dog can bark or not, but when it is agitated, it cannot help but bark.[11] Perfect sourcehood requires not only the ability to do otherwise, but the power to direct this ability as one sees fit, that is, such an agent is the source of which

[6] *ST* I-II, q. 6, aa. 1–2; *QDV*, q. 24, a. 1.
[7] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 29–30, ll. 232–243). In this text Aquinas is particularly focusing on the conditions under which an agent is responsible for omissions, but the point is generalizable.
[8] *ST* I-II, q. 6, a. 2, ad 3. Cf. *QDM*, q. 1, a. 4, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 20, ll. 129–133).
[9] *QDV*, q. 24, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.3: 681, ll. 288–295). Cf. *QDM*, q. 16, a. 5, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 304, ll. 215–230).
[10] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 29–30, ll. 232–236).
[11] *QDV*, q. 24, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.3: 686, ll. 115–133); see also *QDM*, q. 6, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 148, ll. 297–307); *QDM*, q. 16, a. 5, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 304, ll. 219–224).

alternative is actualized. In a given set of external circumstances and internal mental and emotional states, humans can act one way or another.[12] Thus, for free choice and moral responsibility, which contingent alternative becomes actual must itself be in our control. Later in this chapter we will further clarify the difference between the ways nonhuman animals and humans possess the ability to do otherwise.

We may then formulate the "sourcehood condition" – that is, what Aquinas considers the necessary condition for freedom – as follows: agents are free in φ-ing if and only if they have perfect sourcehood. They have perfect sourcehood if and only if they are the source of φ-ing, have alternative possibilities, and are the source of which alternative is actualized.[13]

The sourcehood condition may be met in different ways. The first and most direct way is in virtue of the act itself being an act of the will, such as an intention or a choice. But acts commanded by the will also meet this condition; these acts, even though external to the will, are praiseworthy or blameworthy in virtue of having their source in the will.[14] Omissions, too, meet the sourcehood condition. Some omissions can be traced to an act of the will, either because an activity caused by the will is incompatible with an act one was supposed to do (e.g., wanting to play conflicts with going to church), or because such an activity makes one forget about one's duty (e.g., playing makes one forget to go to church).[15] Other omissions occur without any act of the will, but they are traced to the will because they fall under the will's power. The will could have (and should have) acted, like the pilot of a ship who abandons the rudder out of negligence.[16] Still other acts, although not directly commanded by the will, meet the sourcehood condition in an indirect way. If someone chooses to become drunk, then any acts committed while drunk meet the sourcehood condition, although they are not commanded by the will to the extent that drunkenness blocks reason.[17] The act was unavoidable given the present situation of the agent, but it was possible for the individual to avoid being in such a situation.[18]

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[12] *QDV*, q. 24, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.3: 686, ll. 133–137).
[13] We should here understand φ-ing to cover both actions and omissions.
[14] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2–ad 5; *ST* I-II, q. 6, *prooemium*.
[15] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 30, ll. 244–273).
[16] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 1, ad 2; *ST* I-II, q. 6, a. 3; *ST* I-II, q. 71, a. 5.
[17] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 10, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 89, ll. 77–83).
[18] Eleonore Stump argues that Aquinas does not make alternative possibilities a requirement for moral responsibility, because Aquinas holds that in some cases one can be blamed for actions or passions which one cannot avoid at that moment; see *Aquinas*, 297–300. Yet Aquinas traces such cases to earlier actions or omissions which were in the individual's control. In a state of drunkenness, someone may commit homicide, but he could have avoided getting drunk. Someone may have a sudden feeling of disordered desire or anger, but she could have avoided such feelings by

Perfect sourcehood itself comes in degrees: "The more the source of an act is internal to the agent, the more the act is voluntary," and the more one has moral responsibility.[19] For this reason, Aquinas contends that a sin rooted in the passions – which although internal to the agent are external to the will – is less voluntary and less blameworthy than one rooted in a disposition (*habitus*) of the will.[20] If, however, an act is rooted in a source that is not at all voluntary, then the agent is not morally responsible for it.[21]

The psychology of free choice

We will now offer a close reading of *QDM*, q. 6, where Aquinas presents his theory of the moral psychology that accounts for free choice. He goes into considerable detail to explain that we are the source of our actions and that they are contingent. A careful reading of *QDM*, q. 6 reveals, however, that Aquinas is not too clear about how his theory of intellect and will accounts for perfect sourcehood, that is, how it explains our control over which contingent alternative is actualized.

According to Aquinas, "the active and moving principle in humans is strictly speaking intellect and will."[22] The act we produce by means of our intellect and will is something individual and determinate, something I will to do or something I do here and now, for example, taking medicine, buying a house, or thinking about buying a house. For Aquinas, prior to the choice, the will is not conditioned in any one determinate way; if it were, there would be no room for free choice. Aquinas explains the indeterminacy of the will by the fact that the inclination of the will follows upon intellectual knowledge, that is, knowledge of universals. For example, we understand the nature of a house in general, and the general idea of a house can be realized in many ways, for instance, as a square or a round house. So the will is not conditioned in a determinate way, which means that it is not inclined to any particular one of these.[23] In contrast, nonhuman animals do not have intellectual cognition, but only sensory

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paying more attention. See, e.g., *SCG* III, c. 160; *QDV*, q. 24, a. 12, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.3: 716, ll. 301–318); *QDM*, q. 3, a. 10, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 89, ll. 79–83).

[19] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 13, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 94, ll. 60–61): "quanto magis principium actus est in ipso agente, tanto magis est uoluntarium." See also *QDM*, q. 3, a. 11, ad 3.

[20] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 13, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 94, ll. 63–72) and ad 5.

[21] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 10, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 89, ll. 72–77).

[22] *QDM*, q. 6, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 148, ll. 272–274): "Hoc autem actiuum siue motiuum principium in hominibus proprie est intellectus et uoluntas."

[23] *QDM*, q. 6, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 148, ll. 287–296).

cognition. Since what the senses perceive is always something determinate and particular, the inclination of nonhuman animals is always conditioned in one determinate way. Although they can pursue or avoid things, if they perceive something as pleasurable, they cannot but pursue it, and if they perceive something as painful, they cannot but avoid it.[24]

So if the thought of something does not produce a determinate inclination for or against it, how does the determinacy of a particular volition or action come about? And why does this happen freely? In order to shed light on this issue, Aquinas has to explain the following: the ways in which the will by itself is indeterminate, that is, in potentiality; how it becomes determinate, that is, in act; why this passage from indeterminacy to determinacy does not come about of necessity; and what makes it so that this passage is in the agent's control.

A power, such as intellect or will, is in potentiality (*mouetur*) in two ways: as to the exercise of its act (whether or not to act, whether or not to act intensely) and as to the specification of its act (e.g., whether to see, think, or want this or that).[25] This distinction allows Aquinas to describe the roles of intellect and will in cognition and willing. Knowing does not depend only on the intellect and the known object, but also on the will, because the exercise of the powers of the soul is subject to the will: I think about health whenever I want to think about it. In fact, the proper object of the will is the good; to know or think about something is a particular good, and hence it falls under the will's object. But willing does not depend on the will alone, because the content of my willing – e.g., wanting health, and wanting to take this medicine – depends on the intellect. The proper object of the intellect is the true; the good in general and any particular good, insofar as they are knowable, fall under that object.[26]

How, then, is the will actualized? As to the exercise of its act, just as the will moves the other powers of the soul, so it also moves itself. Not that it is the mover and the moved (that is, in act and in potentiality) in the same respect, for this would be contradictory. Rather, in virtue of already actually willing an end, the will moves itself to will the means to the end. It does not do so directly, for the will does not exercise its act without a reason, but rather by moving the intellect to deliberate and then by willing according to what the intellect concludes. My desire for health causes me to will to think about how to achieve it, and upon deliberation I want

[24] *QDM*, q. 6, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 148, ll. 297–306).
[25] *QDM*, q. 6, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 148, ll. 308–319).
[26] *QDM*, q. 6, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 148–149, ll. 320–354).

to attain health by taking some particular medicine. Is the will free in moving itself, that is, do I control whether my will moves itself? I am the source of the act, because the new volition is caused by my will (albeit by the detour of the intellect, that is, in conjunction with it). In addition, my choice to take this medicine is contingent, for it results from practical deliberation; now deliberation is not demonstrative knowledge, and hence it is not bound to lead to one determinate conclusion, but rather can lead to different results.[27] Am I the perfect source of my act? That is, do I control which contingent choice obtains? Aquinas does not say so explicitly, but, as we will see, that he thinks so is implicit in his view that I control how I conduct the practical deliberation which leads to the choice I make.

But the picture is more complex. We do not always want to deliberate; so what causes us to want to deliberate? Either the will itself, or something else. If our will causes us to want to deliberate about whether we should deliberate, then the problem is only moved one step back. A chain like this may happen up to a point: plausibly one might ask oneself, "Should I take the time to really think about how to achieve this thing?" But certainly the chain cannot go on *ad infinitum*. Aristotle had already posed this problem: Do we deliberate about whether to deliberate? Aristotle thinks that we do not. Instead, according to Aristotle every movement in the soul, just like every movement in the universe, is to be traced to God; so it is God who ultimately causes us to start deliberating.[28] Aquinas adopts this idea, but in a way that does not threaten perfect sourcehood. According to Aquinas, God does not move us directly to deliberate, but rather he moves our will to want to deliberate. And in moving our will, God respects the nature of the will as a contingent cause.[29] How God can move our will without necessitating it remains obscure.[30] In any event, Aquinas rejects the idea that God substitutes his own causality for that of the human will: although moved by God, our will makes its own contribution.[31]

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[27] *QDM*, q. 6, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 149, ll. 360–381).

[28] See *Eudemian Ethics*, VII, c. 14, 1248a18–29.

[29] *QDM*, q. 6, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 149, ll. 407–417) and ad 3; see also *ST* I-II, q. 10, a. 4, c.; *SCG* III c. 89.

[30] For an insightful study of this problem in its own right, see Brian J. Shanley, "Divine Causation and Human Freedom in Aquinas," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72 (1998): 99–122. This issue is central in the problem of predestination and divine foreknowledge and human freedom. For an overview, see Harm Goris, "Divine Foreknowledge, Providence, Predestination, and Human Freedom," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 99–122.

[31] *QDM*, q. 6, ad 4. Aquinas is most clear about the will's own contribution in discussing whether the act of sin must be traced to God as the primary cause of all created things. He argues that the act

As to the specification of its act, the will is moved by something the intellect understands as good and suitable, that is, as good here and now. Is the will free in this respect? Aquinas explicitly addresses only contingency (and hence alternative possibilities), but does not discuss how an agent controls which alternative possibility obtains. He makes the following distinction: if something is judged as good and suitable from every point of view, then it moves the will of necessity. Particular goods, however, do not move the will of necessity: we can will to take this particular medicine because it is good for our health, or prefer not to take it because it tastes bad. Happiness is good from every perspective, so if we think about happiness, we desire it necessarily. But since the thought itself of happiness is just a particular good, we do not necessarily want to think about happiness.[32]

Are we also the source of how our intellect specifies our will? Is it up to us how something appears to us, that is, whether or not we think of it as good and suitable? Do we control whether we judge something to be choiceworthy or not?[33] If we do not control the judgments that specify the acts of our will, we do not have perfect sourcehood, for then we do not control which choices we actually make. We would merely react to how things present themselves to us, as nonhuman animals in fact do.

Aquinas gives some explanations for why the will may be drawn differently to a thing presented to it: one aspect of the thing may stand out over the other; some internal or external event may cause us to think about a particular aspect of the thing; or our passions and dispositions may affect how the thing appears to us. How are we in control of these different ways something appears to us? Aquinas answers this only concerning passions and dispositions: we can calm our passions and – though with more difficulty – overcome a disposition.[34]

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of sin is to be traced to God, while its inordinateness and ugliness (*deformitas*) has its cause not in God but only in free choice (*liberum arbitrium*); see *QDM*, q. 3, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 70, especially ll. 85–99).

[32] *QDM*, q. 6, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 149–150, ll. 418–449). Aquinas admits, however, that particular goods are desired necessarily if they are necessarily connected to happiness and if this connection is known; see *ST* I, q. 82, a. 2, c.

[33] For lucid discussions of these questions, see David M. Gallagher, "Free Choice and Free Judgment in Thomas Aquinas," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 76 (1994): 247–277, and Scott MacDonald, "Aquinas's Libertarian Account of Free Choice," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 52 (1998): 309–328. According to both, Aquinas holds that we control our practical judgments, but MacDonald gives an intellectualist and Gallagher a voluntarist account of how this is so. MacDonald argues that for Aquinas the activity of the will is entirely accounted for by that of the intellect, while Gallagher argues that Aquinas does not think so.

[34] *QDM*, q. 6, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 150, ll. 450–485).

But how do we decide to calm our passions and to overcome our dispositions? If we do so freely, then we must be in control of our judgment that it is worth doing so. The control of this judgment cannot in turn be caused via the control of our passions and dispositions. So calming our passions and removing our dispositions cannot be the only way we control how things appear to us. Does Aquinas also admit that we have direct control of how we consider something, and thereby of how something appears to us?

Aquinas's point that the exercise of the intellect is up to the will indicates that he does. We do not control what we think, that is, we do not control the content of our thoughts, at least not directly. But we do control whether we deliberate or not, that is, whether we act on our first impression or whether we think about an issue more carefully. And we control whether we dwell on a thought or move on to think about something else, and accordingly we control how long we deliberate and in which way we deliberate. Our deliberation ends when we dwell on an option definitively and choose accordingly. In fact, Aquinas argues that even when we have come to consider something worth choosing, we still remain free either to stop thinking about it or to reconsider it, so as to focus on a different aspect that makes that option appear not choiceworthy.[35] Accordingly, since the exercise of the intellect is in the control of the will, the will controls to some extent how it is specified. Let us assume our intellect specifies our will in favor of taking some particular medicine. This specification is in our control, because we can want to dwell on the reasons for doing so ("it will improve my health"), or turn our attention toward other considerations ("it tastes bad," "it can have bad side effects," "it is too expensive," etc.). If we rest finally on one consideration, then this is going to constitute our final practical judgment, according to which we make our choice. The upshot is that the reasons we have for doing something do not explain independently from our will what led us to make this particular choice, that is, why we made this choice rather than that. This solution does have a voluntarist flavor: in the last analysis, we choose this rather than that because we want to. And yet, Aquinas does not adopt a voluntarism according to which the will ultimately acts independently of the intellect, for in his view, whatever we want is motivated by reasons. These reasons for our choice, however, are not contrastive reasons. Why we act on this particular reason ("I want to take this medicine, because it is good for my health") rather than that ("I don't want to take

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[35] *QDM*, q. 6, ad 15.

this medicine, because it tastes bad") has at bottom no other explanation than that we wanted to do so.[36]

But here the threat of a regress appears again. As we have seen, the will exercises its own act not by moving itself directly, but rather through practical deliberation. Presumably, the will also exercises the act of the intellect (to consider this or that) upon some practical deliberation – however basic that deliberation may be. And we can ask again on what grounds the will moves the intellect toward this deliberation, and so forth. Aquinas does not discuss this regress, but it seems to be fundamentally the same sequence of the intellect moving the will and the will moving the intellect as in the regress he discusses concerning the exercise of the will's own act. So most likely he would think that this regress comes to a halt in the same way: what initiates the movement of the will is not the intellect, but God, who moves the will by respecting its nature as a contingent cause.

The compatibility question

We will now discuss more directly a question that was only implicit in the previous sections. How would Aquinas answer the compatibility question: Is free will compatible with determinism? Contemporary definitions of free will and determinism differ from Aquinas's usage, so we suggest an analogue to the compatibility question that fits better with Aquinas's thought: Is free choice possible in a world in which, for every action, there is a state of the world that temporally precedes the act and guarantees its occurrence? A state of the world guarantees the occurrence of an act if given the state of the world, the act cannot help but occur (special divine intervention set aside). We shall refer to such a world as completely determined. According to the compatibilist, free choice and moral responsibility are possible within such a world; according to the incompatibilist, they are not.

It is not obvious that Aquinas's account of perfect sourcehood commits him to answer the compatibility question one way or the other. On the face of it, a completely determined world seems to rule out perfect sourcehood, that is, being the source of one's action and being the source of which alternative one chooses. But the issue is quite complex. In order to see whether perfect sourcehood is possible in a completely determined

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[36] Jeffrey Hause is right to note, however, that we do not find any explicit commitment to voluntarism in Aquinas; see "Thomas Aquinas and the Voluntarists," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 6 (1997): 167–182.

world, we will look at Aquinas's discussions of the contingency of the will's acts and the nature of an agent's ability to do otherwise.

Jones, who lives in a completely determined world, cheats on his wife. His action was guaranteed to occur given the previous states of the world. In what sense is Jones the source of his activity? It is not easy to determine Aquinas's position. For Aquinas, it is crucial for free choice that the will move itself: "If the will were moved by another such that it is nowise moved from itself, the works of the will would not be imputed for merit or demerit."[37] If prior conditions guarantee that Jones acts as he does, does he still move himself? This may depend on how the prior conditions guarantee his choice. They cannot efficiently cause the choice, since for Aquinas no created being can be an efficient cause of the will's act.[38] Can prior conditions guarantee his choice by formal causality? According to Aquinas, what is apprehended by the intellect – in Jones's case, the woman as sexually attractive – is a formal cause of the will's act.[39] But Aquinas claims that a formal cause does not condition the will to one determinate result[40] and that "the will's object does not necessarily move the will."[41] Such passages do not decisively settle the issue in favor of incompatibilist interpreters, however, since the notion of necessity operative here is unclear. For this reason, we now turn to an investigation of necessity.

Do Aquinas's claims about the contingency of the will's acts provide us with his answer to the compatibility question? This depends upon how we should understand Aquinas's claim that human choices are not necessary, and, unfortunately, the precise meaning of this claim is not apparent. Aquinas discusses what he means by necessity repeatedly,[42] but it is not entirely clear how he uses the word when discussing human freedom, most notably in *QDM*, q. 6. The form of necessity that poses the biggest threat to freedom is the necessity of coercion, that is, necessity imposed upon the will from an external efficient cause. As we will see shortly, we cannot understand the denial that human acts are necessitated as *merely* a denial that they are subject to coercion. Even if we grant

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[37] *ST* I, q. 105, a. 4, ad 3 (*Editio Leonina*, V: 474): "Si voluntas ita moueretur ab alio quod ex se nullatenus moueretur, opera voluntatis non imputarentur ad meritum vel demeritum."

[38] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 73, ll. 217–221).

[39] *QDM*, q. 6, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 148, ll. 327–328); *ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 1, c.

[40] *QDM*, q. 6, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 148, ll. 287–296).

[41] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 73, ll. 213–216): "Patet ergo quod obiectum non ex necessitate mouet uoluntatum."

[42] See *In Peri herm.* I, l. 13 (*Editio Leonina*, I*.1: 67–68, ll. 160–209); *ST* I, q. 82, a. 1; *ST* III, q. 14, a. 2. For a discussion of Aquinas's use of modal terms, see Simo Knuuttila, *Modalities in Medieval Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1993), 129–137.

this point, Aquinas's modal claims about the will's acts remain ambiguous. The claim that some act is not necessary may take all relevant factors into consideration, or it may prescind from some. For example, "Jones does not necessarily choose to cheat on his wife" may be a general claim about human beings confronted with particular kinds of temptation, or it may be the claim that Jones's choice here and now is not guaranteed by anything, even his complete mental and emotional state prior to choice. Because of this ambiguity, the bare claim that the will's acts are not necessary is not as such sufficient to discover Aquinas's view on the compatibility question.

Do Aquinas's claims about an agent's ability to do otherwise tell us how he would answer the compatibility question? There is an ambiguity in Aquinas's contentions about this ability similar to the ambiguity in his modal claims. How one understands the ability to do otherwise turns on how broadly or narrowly one conceives of "ability." A broad reading of "ability" allows for a conditional analysis of this term. According to such a reading, I have the ability to φ if and only if I would have φ-ed if I had chosen, wished, or tried to do so. Classical compatibilism relies on the conditional analysis of "ability." At first glance, however, Aquinas does not appear to subscribe to such a reading, for according to him, strictly speaking, an agent is able to do something only if the precondition for the exercise of the ability is possible. Thus, he concedes that according to the conditional analysis, one may say that God can sin if he wishes, but he argues that God is not able to sin, strictly speaking, since it is impossible for him to wish to do so.[43] Also, the devil can convert if he wants, but he cannot want to convert, and so he cannot convert, simply speaking.[44] Likewise, it seems, for Aquinas abilities grounded upon conditions that in a given situation do not obtain are not at issue in discussions of free choice. Jones cannot do otherwise, strictly speaking, if he cannot alter the conditions that necessitate his choice. This does not settle the question, however, because Aquinas suggests that there are different kinds or levels of the ability to do otherwise. In order to understand more deeply his claims concerning such abilities, then, we must contrast the kinds of abilities we possess with those possessed by nonhuman animals.

Aquinas notes that animals are similar to humans insofar as they act sometimes in one way and at other times in another. Nevertheless, this diversity in activity arises because animals perceive different things at different times. Given the things an animal perceives at a given moment,

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[43] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 1, ad 11 and ad 12.   [44] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 5, ad 7.

however, it is only able to act in one determinate way.[45] Elsewhere, Aquinas notes that nonhuman animals have a certain semblance of freedom insofar as their acts follow from their judgments of what is worth pursuing or avoiding, but he concludes that since their judgments are determined by what they sense and by their passions, they lack complete freedom. A sheep may either run or stand still. If, however, a sheep is confronted by a wolf, the sheep cannot help but run away. So the ability to either run or remain still is conditional upon what objects a sheep senses.[46] We may say, then, that a sheep has the ability to do otherwise according to a conditional analysis. We shall refer to such an ability as a conditional ability to do otherwise.

For Aquinas, the human condition differs from that of other animals. How so? On this point, Aquinas can be read in two ways. According to an incompatibilist reading, Aquinas claims that, unlike other animals, humans possess the ability to do otherwise in an unconditional sense. This is to say that humans are able to perform an act or refrain from it, and nothing prior to the final practical judgment guarantees which possibility will become actual. On this reading, "ability" cannot be understood according to a conditional analysis, and we shall call such an ability an unconditional ability to do otherwise.

In contrast, according to a compatibilist reading, Aquinas claims that the ability to do otherwise possessed by humans is conditional, albeit in a way that does not undermine free choice. Given our nature, our emotions, our dispositions, the state of all our internal powers, and the objects that confront us, we cannot help but act in a particular way – a way that is guaranteed by a state of the world prior to our practical deliberation. Notice that the compatibilist reading does not eliminate every distinction between human and animal activity, for an important distinction remains intact, albeit one that is psychological rather than modal. Although all humans may be fully determined, the formation of their choices is far more complex than that of nonhuman animals, involving the influence of higher-order beliefs and desires that nonhuman animals are incapable of.[47] Clearly, then, even on a compatibilist reading, the control possessed by humans is more robust than that which Aquinas grants to other animals.

Consider, once again, Jones, who lives in a fully determined world and chooses to cheat on his wife. According to the incompatibilist reading of

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[45] *QDM*, q. 6, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 148, ll. 300–306) and ad 3.   [46] See note 11 above.

[47] For a discussion of how animal behavior and human actions would differ, even if all they did was necessitated, see Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 232.

Aquinas, Jones cannot be the perfect source of his activity because he lacks the ability to do otherwise. According to a compatibilist reading, in contrast, he does possess a certain sort of ability to do otherwise, and this ability is sufficiently robust to allow for perfect sourcehood. This ability, like that of sheep, is clearly conditional. But it is unlike that of sheep, because the factors that make a human choose one way or the other are substantially different than those that determine animal behavior. We may say, then, that nonhuman animals possess a "weak conditional ability to do otherwise," whereas humans have a "strong conditional ability to do otherwise" according to the compatibilist reading and an "unconditional ability to do otherwise" according to the incompatibilist reading.

How can we adjudicate between the compatibilist and incompatibilist interpretations of Aquinas? In *QDM*, q. 6, Aquinas discusses a view which holds that sourcehood without alternative possibilities is sufficient for free choice. This view was apparently defended by a contemporary of his:

> Some held that the human will is moved of necessity to choose something. They did not hold, however, that the will is forced, for not everything that is necessary is coerced, but only that whose source [*principium*] is external. Hence there are some natural movements that are necessary, but not coerced. For coercion is incompatible with what is natural and what is voluntary, since the source of both is internal, whereas the source of what is coerced is external.[48]

No mention is made here of freedom and responsibility, but for Aquinas, these are at issue here. Aquinas flatly rejects this necessitarian view.[49] The human will, he claims, is not moved of necessity in all its acts. For Aquinas, such necessitated acts could no longer be meritorious or demeritorious, since an agent did not possess the ability to avoid performing them. Thus he rejects the view that we choose necessarily because he thinks that we would lack alternative possibilities. This is an argument from faith, for merit and demerit are theological notions. But moral philosophy, too, would fall apart, for "if something were not up to us, but if

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[48] *QDM*, q. 6, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 147–148, ll. 238–247): "quidam posuerunt quod uoluntas hominis ex necessitate mouetur ad aliquid eligendum. Nec tamen ponebant quod uoluntas cogeretur: non enim omne necessarium est uiolentum, set solum illud cuius principium est extra. Unde et motus naturales inueniuntur aliqui necessarii, non tamen uiolenti: uiolentum enim repugnat naturali sicut et uoluntario, quia utriusque principium est intra, uiolenti autem principium est extra."

[49] Likewise, in 1270 Stephen Tempier, bishop of Paris, condemned the view that "the human will wants or chooses of necessity"; see *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, ed. Heinrich Denifle and Émile Chatelain, vol. I (Paris: Delalain, 1889), 487: "Quod voluntas hominis ex necessitate vult vel eligit."

we were moved of necessity to will something, then deliberation, exhortation, precepts, punishment, and praise and blame – which are the concern of moral philosophy – would disappear."[50]

Would Aquinas have rejected this view if he had thought that what is required for free choice is merely a conditional ability to do otherwise, albeit a strong one? We think not, but rather argue that his rejection of the necessitarian view suggests that he sees the unconditional ability to do otherwise as required for free choice. If we are correct, then his rejection of the necessitarian view provides grounds for concluding that he is an incompatibilist.

Consider how one might interpret Aquinas's rejection of the necessitarian view if Aquinas himself is an incompatibilist. In this case, his rejection is quite straightforward. The necessitarian denies that human agents possess an unconditional ability to do otherwise. Since, according to the incompatibilist interpretation, such an ability is essential to free choice, the necessitarian view eliminates the possibility of free choice.

In contrast, if we read Aquinas as a compatibilist, then his rejection of the necessitarian view is odd. After all, he rejects it because it rules out the ability to do otherwise. As a compatibilist, Aquinas should not care if unconditional abilities are threatened, but only if strong conditional abilities are eliminated, leaving us merely with weak conditional abilities, that is, the ones possessed by nonhuman animals. It is difficult, however, to see why the necessitarian view would eliminate strong conditional abilities, for nothing indicates that it levels the difference between the abilities possessed by humans and those possessed by other animals. Had it leveled this difference, it would have given Aquinas a further reason to reject it, for, quite obviously, humans react to situations in a much less predictable way than other animals. It seems best, then, to read Aquinas as defending the need for an unconditional ability to do otherwise and to understand his rejection of the necessitarian view as a rejection of compatibilism.

Angelic free choice

As further support against a compatibilist interpretation of Aquinas's account of free choice, we are now going to consider this question: Does Aquinas think there is any particular act by a rational creature that is not

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[50] *QDM*, q. 6, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 148, ll. 256–260): "Si enim non sit aliquid in nobis, set ex necessitate mouemur ad uolendum, tollitur deliberatio, exhortatio, preceptum, et punitio et laus et uituperium, circa que moralis philosophia consistit."

guaranteed to occur given previous states of the world? If there is any such act, in Aquinas's view, then he is not a determinist. The most compelling reason for thinking Aquinas is a compatibilist – that he is a psychological determinist – would then lose its force. We will now argue that Aquinas thinks that the first sin that happened in the universe, the sin of Lucifer, was not guaranteed to happen given previous states of the world.

Aquinas seeks to give a philosophical explanation of the Christian doctrine of the fall of the angels. The theological consensus at his time was that angels were created without flaw, but immediately after the first moment of their existence, Lucifer, followed by some, but not all, angels, sinned. However they acted, their choice was irreversible: those who sinned could not revert to the good, while those who did not sin were granted the beatific vision and were no longer able to sin.

The case of angelic sin in general and of Lucifer's sin in particular poses unique difficulties, which Aquinas takes pains to solve within the parameters of his general theory of free choice. For Aquinas, the metaphysical problem of what can be the first cause of evil in a universe that was created good comes down to the question of how a good will can become bad and cause an evil act. As the first sinful act, Aquinas cannot trace it to previous sins. Furthermore, as pure intellects, angels experience no passions that could cloud their judgment of what is to be chosen, and prior to their sin they had no dispositions inclining them to evil. Whereas human sin occurs in complex existential conditions, the sin of the angels is rooted entirely in the intellect and the will. While Aquinas seems to make every effort to avoid the voluntarist temptation of explaining an act of free choice by an act of the will that is ultimately independent of the intellect, his explanation of the fall of the angels arguably has a voluntarist bent. In contrast, his explanation of the demonic obstinacy in evil is decidedly intellectualist.[51]

For Aquinas, the angels could not have sinned by desiring something evil, but only by desiring something good. Evil qua evil cannot be desired, because evil as such falls outside of the proper object of the will. The will is a rational or intellectual appetite, which means that its proper object is the good insofar as it is known and presented to the will by reason or the intellect. "So evil cannot happen in the appetite by departing from the

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[51] For a detailed discussion of Aquinas's theory of the fall of the angels, see Tobias Hoffmann, "Aquinas and Intellectual Determinism: The Test Case of Angelic Sin," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 89 (2007): 122–156. For Aquinas's intellectualist explanation of why angelic sin is irreversible, see Hoffmann, "Theories of Angelic Sin from Aquinas to Ockham," in *A Companion to Angels in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Tobias Hoffmann (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 306–308.

knowledge it follows."[52] In other words, as long as the intellect has the correct practical judgment of what is to be desired or chosen here and now, the will cannot become evil by departing from this practical judgment. For Aquinas, this is as true for angels as it is for humans.[53] Can the will become evil by acting on a mistaken practical judgment? This is what typically happens in human sin: something evil is pursued under the guise of the good (*sub ratione boni*), e.g., adultery is chosen because it is seen as a good inasmuch as it is pleasurable. But Aquinas considers the angels' intellect to be infallible – at least prior to their first sin – and hence they cannot mistake something evil for a good.[54] So he denies that the angels could sin by pursuing something evil. But for Aquinas, they could sin by pursuing something truly good, albeit apart from the way it was supposed to be pursued, namely as determined by a divine rule.[55] Concretely, Aquinas assumes that like the good angels, the evil angels desired the good of supernatural happiness, but the evil angels failed to consider the divine rule that such happiness was to be obtained by divine grace, rather than attained by their own effort.[56]

How did this choice come about? What caused the evil angels not to heed the rule? And what caused them to make a choice in disregard of the rule? In *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, Aquinas explains in more detail how cognitive and volitional deficiencies are presupposed when a good will becomes bad. The will sins by acting apart from the rule that measures its acts. But Aquinas denies that the angelic will can act contrary to the rule of action in full awareness of the rule. Therefore, acting apart from the rule presupposes the volitional deficiency of not making the intellect consider the rule (and by implication the cognitive deficiency of not actually considering the rule). But Aquinas insists that this deficiency is not in itself a sin. If it were, we would have a regress: the non-consideration of the rule would be the sin that requires explanation, and then this sin would in turn presuppose not considering the rule, and so forth. Rather, the sin consists in acting while not actually considering the rule relevant to this act. Analogously, a carpenter does not go wrong in not using a measure,

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[52] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 288–289, ll. 267–269): "non ergo potest malum in appetitu accidere ex hoc quod discordet ab apprehensione quam sequitur."

[53] E.g., *QDV*, q. 24, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.3: 685, ll. 79–81); *ST* I-II, q. 13, a. 3; *QDM*, q. 16, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 288, ll. 261–267).

[54] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 2, arg. 4 and ad 4, arg. 5 and ad 5; cf. *ST* I, q. 58, a. 5.

[55] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 289, ll. 300–306), ad 1, ad 4 and ad 5; see also *ST* I, q. 63, a. 1, ad 4.

[56] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 2, ad 4; *QDM*, q. 16, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 294, ll. 219–229).

but in failing to use a measure while he is cutting wood. "And likewise, the sin of the will does not consist in the fact that it does not pay attention to the rule of reason or of the divine law, but it results from the fact that while it is not having a rule or measure, it proceeds to make a choice."[57] What causes the will to fail to use the rule when it is making a choice that was to be measured by it? Nothing! "It is not necessary to search for some cause for the aforementioned nonuse of the rule, for the freedom of the will, by which it can act or not act, is sufficient for this."[58] What is important is that Aquinas does not trace the nonuse of the rule to some antecedent cause. In fact, what could he have traced it to? He holds that the evil angels sinned immediately after the first moment of their existence.[59] So if the sin were to be traced to an earlier cause, that would have to be their state right at the moment of creation. But at that moment, all angels were for all relevant purposes in the same existential conditions. No angel had from the outset a greater predisposition to sin than any other; in fact, no angel had *any* predisposition to sin.

Hence, what causes one angel – e.g., Lucifer – to sin, and another angel – e.g., Michael – not to sin? Both certainly had reasons for acting one way or the other. For example, Aquinas supposes that the evil angels were attracted and absorbed by their own beauty.[60] But a known object does not efficiently cause the choice to pursue it, and hence in the presence of something attractive, the will remains free to will it or not will it.[61] In fact, Michael, too, was aware of his own beauty, but contrary to Lucifer, this did not cause him to sin. Hence, whatever motive Lucifer might have had for sinning, it is at best a penultimate explanation, for it does not explain why Lucifer acted for this motive in the first place. Therefore there is ultimately no contrastive explanation available of why Lucifer sinned rather than not, or why Lucifer sinned but Michael did not. If Lucifer's sin cannot be traced to causes that are prior to his bad will, then it was not guaranteed to occur given previous states of the world. A deterministic explanation of Lucifer's sin is to be ruled out.

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[57] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 16, ll. 281–285): "Et similiter culpa uoluntatis non est in hoc quod non actu attendit ad regulam rationis uel legis diuine, set ex hoc quod non habens regulam uel mensuram huiusmodi procedit ad eligendum."

[58] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 16, ll. 268–271): "Huius autem quod est non uti regula predicta non oportet aliquam causam querere, quia ad hoc sufficit ipsa libertas uoluntatis, per quam potest agere uel non agere." See also ad 6 and ad 13.

[59] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 4.

[60] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 2, ad 13; *SCG* III, c. 110.

[61] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 15, ll. 237–239); cf. *QDM*, q. 3, a. 3, c. (72, ll. 168–171).

Conclusion

Aquinas's theory of free choice attempts to account for moral responsibility. Acts of free choice, and hence acts for which we are morally responsible, presuppose perfect sourcehood (or "voluntariness in the perfect sense"). Agents who have perfect sourcehood are the source of their act, possess the ability to do otherwise, and control which alternative possibility is chosen. We hold Aquinas to defend the need for an unconditional ability to do otherwise: our free choices are not guaranteed by our internal states and by external circumstances prior to our practical deliberation. A compatibilist reading of Aquinas seems implausible to us, given his rejection of the necessitarian position in *QDM*, q. 6 and given his account of the fall of the angels. While our choices are not guaranteed by the state of the world prior to practical deliberation, they are however not irrational. For Aquinas, there is no act of the will that is not done for a reason. The contingency of our choices does not make them irrational. Practical deliberation can take different directions and can come up with different results. Whatever the resulting choice, it will be a choice done for a reason; yet it was possible for the agent's practical deliberation to have proceeded differently, which would have resulted in a different choice, done for a different reason.

Venial sin and the ultimate end

Steven J. Jensen

In the *QDM,* Aquinas devotes an entire question to the topic of venial sin, constituting almost one eighth of the material in the work.[1] No comparable treatment can be found for mortal sin (although one might argue that the bulk of the disputed question presumptively concerns mortal sins). In the question on venial sin a fair portion of the articles concern the possibility of venial sin in various subjects: can venial sin be in sensuality, in higher reason, in angels, and in Adam and Eve in their initial state of innocence? In the *ST* Aquinas asks an additional question concerning the possibility of venial sin: is venial sin possible for the first moral choice of an unbaptized youth?[2]

Aquinas never asks, in the *QDM* or elsewhere, whether venial sin is possible in our current state, but perhaps he should have. Several thinkers claim that he cannot coherently explain the possibility of venial sin; his account of the ultimate end precludes the possibility. Germain Grisez, for instance, accuses Aquinas of inconsistency concerning his teaching on venial sin and the ultimate end.[3] According to Aquinas all of our good actions must be ordered to our true ultimate end, which is God. In a mortal sin, the sinner rejects God as his ultimate end and places his end in some creature, such as pleasure. When committing a venial sin, however, someone in a state of grace does not reject God as his ultimate end. Nevertheless, the venial sin does not have God as its end. A venial sin, then, neither places a creature as its end (as does a mortal sin) nor has God as its end (as does a good action). Evidently, then, it has no ultimate end. Unfortunately, this conclusion (according to Grisez) contradicts Aquinas's

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[1] *QDM*, q. 7, aa. 1–12.   [2] *ST* III, q. 89, a. 6.

[3] Germain Grisez, "The True Ultimate End of Human Beings: The Kingdom, Not God Alone," *Theological Studies* 69 (2008): 38–61, at 44–46. Peter Ryan makes the same objection against Aquinas in "Must the Acting Person Have a Single Ultimate End?" *Gregorianum* 82 (2001): 325–356, at 349–354.

teaching that every human action is ordered to an ultimate end. Aquinas's teaching on venial sin, then, appears inconsistent with his broader action theory.

The difficulty is not new with Grisez. Thomists have discussed it for centuries, and indeed Aquinas himself was aware of the difficulty.[4] Grisez provides little indication, however, that attempts have been made to resolve the problem, although he does acknowledge a distinction – common to every solution – between an actual and habitual order to an end. Unfortunately, he mischaracterizes habitual order, describing instead a third kind of order – otherwise ignored by Grisez – namely, a virtual order to an end.[5] Following the text of Aquinas, Thomists have typically concluded that venial sins can be ordered to God as to their ultimate end, but not actually or virtually; they can be ordered toward God only habitually.[6] Since Grisez's habitual order is in fact virtual order, he rightly concludes that venial sins cannot be "habitually" ordered (his meaning) to the divine good.

A complete solution to the difficulty should include other considerations.[7] Aquinas says that venial sins are not against the law but apart from the law;[8] he says that venial sins do not involve a disorder concerning the end but concerning that which is ordered to the end;[9] he says that venial sins do not have the full character of a sin.[10] Furthermore, Aquinas claims that the angels cannot and could never perform venial sins.[11] He

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[4] See, for instance, *In Sent* I, d. 1, q. 3, a. 1, arg. 4; *QDM*, q. 7, a. 1, arg. 1; *ST* I-II, q. 88, a. 1, arg. 3. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange emphasizes the traditional nature of this difficulty in "La fin ultime du péché véniel," *Revue Thomiste* 29 (1924): 313–317, at 314.

[5] Grisez, "The True Ultimate End of Human Beings," 45. Ryan also labels virtual intention as habitual intention in "Must the Acting Person Have a Single Ultimate End?" 332, 350.

[6] Aquinas does not often speak of a virtual order to the end. He simply says that venial sins are ordered habitually to the end but cannot be ordered actually. Nevertheless, he sometimes makes the threefold distinction explicit. Perhaps the most forceful text with regard to venial sin (although Aquinas does not use the terminology "virtual") is *In Sent* II, d. 38, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4. For other texts of Aquinas applying the distinction to venial sin, see *In Sent* I, d. 1, q. 3, a. 1, ad 4; *In Sent* II, d. 40, q. 1, a. 5, ad 7; *In Sent* II, d. 42, q. 1, a. 3, ad 5; *QDM*, q. 7, a. 1, ad 1 and ad 9; *ST* I-II, q. 88, a. 1, ad 2 and ad 3; *ST* II-II, q. 24, a. 10, ad 2; *ST* II-II, q. 44, a. 4, ad 2. Recent treatments of venial sin have underemphasized the threefold distinction. A. J. McNicholl "The Ultimate End of Venial Sin," *The Thomist* 2 (1940): 373–409 is an exception; see also Thomas Deman, "Péché véniel et fin dernière," in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, v. 12 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1933), 237–244, at 239–240.

[7] P. De Letter lays out the relevant features of venial sin, together with the corresponding texts, in "Venial Sin and Its Final Goal," *The Thomist* 16 (1953): 32–70.

[8] *In Sent* II, d. 24, q. 3, a. 5, ad 1; *In Sent* II, d. 42, q. 1, a. 4, ad 4; *QDV*, q. 15, a. 5, ad 1; *QDM*, q. 7, a. 1, ad 1; *ST* I-II, q. 88, a. 1, ad 1.

[9] *QDM*, q. 7, a. 1, ad 21; *QDM*, q. 7, a. 2; *QDM*, q. 7, a. 3; *ST* I-II, q. 88, a. 1; *ST* I-II, q. 88, a. 5; *ST* II-II, q. 24, a. 10.

[10] *In Sent* II, d. 22, q. 1, a. 3; *QDM*, q. 7, a. 6, ad 1; *QDM*, q. 7, a. 1, ad 2 and ad 7; *ST* I-II, q. 78, a. 2, ad 1; *ST* I-II, q. 88, a. 1, ad 1.

[11] *QDM*, q. 7, a. 9; *ST* I-II, q. 89, a. 4.

also claims that Adam and Eve in the state of paradise could not perform venial sins.[12] In addition, no solution – and indeed the problem itself – makes sense without an understanding of the nature of the will and its object. Each of these pieces must fit together to resolve the puzzle that venial sin poses for human actions and the ultimate end.

The solution to the difficulty, as presented below, will involve three broad topics: first, the tripartite division between habitual, virtual, and actual order to an end; second, the nature of the will and the ultimate end; finally, the sorts of defective reasoning that enter into sinful actions. Before we turn to the first of these topics, we should give an initial account of what venial sin is. Both venial sin and mortal sin are in some manner evil or disordered actions. They differ, most notably, in their punishment.[13] Mortal sins are deserving of the eternal punishment of hell, while venial sins receive only temporary punishment, in this life or the next. Aquinas insists, however, that this difference is incidental; the essential difference has to do with the life of grace. Mortal sin destroys the life of grace and the love of God, for it turns against God and turns toward some creature as toward an ultimate end; in contrast, venial sin leaves the love of God intact, for it does not turn against God.[14] Mortal sin has two elements, an aversion and a conversion; it turns away from God and toward a creature. In contrast, venial sin has only the latter element, a conversion toward some creature; it does not turn away from God.[15]

We should note that venial sin is, in a strict sense, a theological term, used within the supernatural context. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to conceive, on the natural level, a close parallel to venial sin, a kind of minor offense against the divine good, naturally perceived, or even perhaps a kind of minor offense against another human being, which does not destroy the love for that human being. On the natural level, there is surely a difference between a husband committing adultery and a husband snapping at his wife. The first is destructive to the relationship, corresponding to mortal sin, while the second is not, corresponding to venial sin.

Habitual, virtual, and actual orders

These ideas will be better understood within the context of the threefold division of orders to an end: actual, virtual, and habitual.[16] For venial

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[12] *QDM*, q. 7, a. 8; *ST* I-II, q. 89, a. 3.
[13] *QDM*, q. 7, a. 1; *ST* I-II, q. 88, a. 1. [14]*QDM*, q. 7, a. 1.
[15] *QDM*, q. 7, a. 1, ad 3; *QDM*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 8; *QDM*, q. 7, a. 10, ad 10.
[16] For a thorough treatment of this distinction, to which I am greatly indebted, see Thomas M. Osborne, Jr., "The Threefold Referral of Acts to the Ultimate End in Thomas Aquinas and His Commentators," *Angelicum* 85 (2008): 715–736.

sins this division is applied to the ultimate end, but the division applies more broadly to any end that a person might set for himself, whether it be the ultimate end or some lesser end. Aquinas, for instance, gives the example of a destination, such as going to church, for which he allows an actual order, a virtual order, and a habitual order.[17] It will prove easier to understand the distinction for lesser ends, only later applying it to the ultimate end.

I will use the example of a mother's love for her son. To say that a mother loves her son indicates that she seeks his good, for to love is to will the good of someone.[18] She sets the good of her son, then, as an end. Of course, it is not her only end. She can also love many others, such as her other children, her husband, and even herself.

The love for her son can be actual, virtual, or habitual. Actual is the most straightforward. It means that she performs some action for the sake of her son; she is quite conscious that it is good for her son, and she consciously wills it as such. The remaining two orders are less straightforward, although their existence is unquestionable. While the mother is asleep, she still loves her son, although she has no conscious thought of him. This love can be described as habitual. Similarly, if she is reading a book that has nothing to do with the good of her son, she still loves him habitually, although she is not thinking about him at all.

A third state – virtual love – is evident when the mother performs some action directed toward the good of her son, although she is not currently thinking of him or the order of her action. Suppose, for instance, that she decides to build a playset for her son. At first, she consciously adverts to the order to the good of her son, but as she gets engrossed in putting the set together she does not think upon her son; she thinks only upon the work at hand. She does not have an actual order to his good, for she is not consciously directing her action to him. Nevertheless, her love seems to be more than merely habitual, for she is doing something that furthers the goal of her love.

Both of the latter two orders presuppose an actual ordering. A mother cannot habitually love her son unless she has first actually directed herself to his good; similarly, she cannot virtually love him in some action unless she has previously directed this action to the good of her son. A more precise division, then, would be as follows: an order to an end can either be actual or non-actual; if it is non-actual, then it can involve some action

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[17] See *ST* I-II, q. 1, a. 6, ad 3; *In Sent* I, d. 1, q. 3, ad 4.   [18] *ST* I-II, q. 26, a. 4.

that is indeed directed to the end, which is a virtual ordering, or it can involve an action or inaction (as in sleep) that is unconnected with the end, which is an habitual ordering.

Of the three, the habitual order seems the most problematic, although we readily recognize its existence. It need not apply to actions, and indeed it seems only incidental to actions; most properly, it applies to the person herself. The mother has set the good of her son as one of the ends that she seeks in life. She herself is ordered to this end. Consequently, all that she does – or does not do – is ordered to this end, in so far as it is associated with her. Reading the book may have nothing to do with the good of her son; nevertheless, it is her action, and she herself is directed to the good of her son. By association, then, so is her act of reading. If the action does in fact concern the good of her son, then it is ordered to his good by more than association, and it becomes virtually ordered to his good.

Two misunderstandings concerning virtual order must be avoided. First, it does not suffice that the action happens to promote the end; the agent must have previously recognized the link to the end. If the mother is reading a book that happens to contain information that will prove beneficial to her son, then it has some real order to his benefit. Nevertheless, if the mother is unaware of this order, then her action is not virtually ordered to the good of her son; it remains only habitually ordered.

In the following text Aquinas does not use the terminology of "virtual order," but he does clearly lay out the conditions for the virtual order.

> In order for an action to have God or charity as its end it is not necessary to think about God or charity while performing the action. On the other hand, it does not suffice for someone to have God or charity as an end only in habit (for then someone would order even venial sins into God, which is false). It is necessary that there be some prior thought upon the end, which is charity or God, and that reason ordered the subsequent actions into this end, so that the rectitude of this ordination is retained in subsequent actions.[19]

Second, the agent need not recognize the entire link to the end in a single act of understanding; it suffices if the agent recognizes each link

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[19] *In Sent* II, d. 38, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, ed. R. P. Mandonnet, v. 2, (Paris: Lethielleux, 1929), 969: "ad hoc quod alicujus actionis finis sit Deus vel charitas, non oportet quod agendo illam actionem aliquis de Deo vel charitate cogitet: nec iterum sufficit quod aliquis in habitu tantum Deum et charitatem habeat, quia sic etiam actum venialis peccati aliquis in Deum ordinaret, quod falsum est: sed oportet quod prius fuerit cogitatio de fine, qui est charitas vel Deus, et quod ratio actiones sequentes in hunc finem ordinaverit; ita quod rectitudo illius ordinationis in actionibus sequentibus salvetur." See also *In Sent* II, d. 40, q. 1, a. 5, ad 7.

successively. Suppose the mother recognizes, for instance, that a playset would be beneficial to her son; she has recognized the first link. She then sees that putting the playset together is ordered to his having the playset. Next, she comes to understand that affixing these two bars together is ordered to building the playset. She then sees that screwing this screw into these bars will affix them. Then she perceives that going to get the screwdriver is ordered to screwing in this screw. Her act of walking to get the screwdriver is virtually ordered to the good of her son. She has not stepped back and looked at the big picture, perceiving all at once that this act of walking is directed to the good of her son; she thinks of it only as directed to the good of screwing in this screw. Nevertheless, she has successively made all the links necessary to trace the action back to the good of her son.

This successive tracing can extend over long periods of time. A young man wants to become an engineer. As he matures, he comes to see that this will entail going to college. When he goes to college, he perceives that he must take some classes, including classes in philosophy or theology. While taking a particular philosophy class, he sees that he must work hard and take good notes. While taking notes, he perceives that he must sharpen his pencil. His act of walking to the pencil sharpener is virtually directed to becoming an engineer, although he does not consciously think of it as such. He has made all the links connecting his action to the end, but he has done so over a series of years (probably renewing certain steps periodically).

For lesser ends, short of the ultimate end, it is not difficult to see what might correspond to "mortal sin" and "venial sin."[20] The mother who loves her son sins against him "mortally" if she decides no longer to seek his good. This decision might arise because the good of her son appears to conflict with some other good that she prefers. She falls in with a lover who wants nothing to do with her son, and she must decide between the lover and her son. If she sets aside the good of her son for the sake of the lover, then she "sins mortally" against her son. Her action has both conversion and aversion. She turns toward the good of the lover; she turns away from the good of her son.

Recall that venial sin has only conversion and not aversion. It is not difficult to find such actions for the maternal habitual love. The example

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[20] Although McNicholl incorporates many elements of the solution presented in this paper, he seems to conclude that venial sin is possible only in relation to a supernatural end; see "The Ultimate End of Venial Sin," 408.

of reading would suffice. The mother turns to some good in the act of read-ing – perhaps simply her own enjoyment – that in no way involves the good of her son; nevertheless, she does not turn away from her son's good. This example lacks the note of offense that we might expect of sin, for by reading the book the mother need not offend against her son. To some extent, this lack of offense is appropriate for venial sin, which does not have the full char-acter of sin.

Nevertheless, within the example of maternal love a closer analogy with venial sin can be found. The trouble with the book example is that the action has nothing to do with the son at all, either positive or negative, while a sin in some manner relates negatively to the person sinned against. Some tiny offense, then, is a more appropriate example. The mother yells at her son, in no way to his own advantage. We should hardly say that the mother has given up her habitual love; she has not turned against or abandoned the good of her son. Her action, however, in no way promotes the good of her son. She does it because she converts to some other good, such as her own gratifi-cation. The act of yelling is not entirely unrelated to the son but in fact bears upon him. It does not bear upon him, however, as promoting his good, so it can in no way be actually or virtually ordered to his good. On the other hand, the action does not treat the son as a kind of evil, such that she rejects his good. Rather, her action treats him – with his good presented before the mother – as something she must choose to ignore.

Before we apply the threefold ordering of actions to the ultimate end, we should address two puzzles concerning habitual order: first, why does this order remain until it is rejected? Second, in what sense does the end serve as an end – as a kind of final cause – while remaining only habit-ual? In actual ordering, the end clearly acts as some kind of cause of the agent's behavior, leading him to act. Likewise, an action virtually ordered to the end is still caused by the end, for the agent chooses the action only because it is directed to some more proximate end, which he has previ-ously perceived to be linked to the end further down the way. In the case of habitual order, however, the end seems to exert no causality upon the action, which indeed is unconnected with the end.

John of St. Thomas proposes that the end still acts negatively upon the action.[21] De Letter, however, thinks that talk of negative causality is

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[21] John of St. Thomas, *Cursus theologicus: in Primam secundae*, vol. 1 (Lyon: Sumptibus Philippi Borde, Lavrentii Arnaud, Petri Borde, & Guilielmi Barbier, 1643), 1–2, disp. 1, a. 7, n. 41–55, 73–75. Jordan Aumann also defends the notion of negative causality for venial sins in "The Theology of Venial Sin," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 10 (1955): 74–94, at 81.

meaningless and has no basis in Aquinas.[22] Indeed, it is far from clear how a final cause might act negatively; nevertheless, we shall see that the idea does have some basis in the texts of Aquinas. It may be wise, however, to begin by answering the first question posed above: why does a habitual order remain until it is rejected and replaced by the order to some alternate end?

A habitual order is a kind of plan that a person has set. It might be as simple as a plan to go to the concert tonight at 8 PM or it might be as grand as a plan to become the CEO of a company within 10 years. In any event, it is a decision we make; a course of action upon which we settle. If we have really settled upon it, then we must treat it as if it will come to be. For instance, if Kenny plans on going to a concert at 8 PM, then he cannot agree to do something else at the same time.[23] If we did not fix ourselves to a course of action, then we would become immobilized in making future decisions, for we could not determine what we are going to do at any given future point. By the nature of the case, then, a decision is something that we set in place, not to be removed.

Of course, we can change our minds. If an old friend drops by, Kenny might decide to forgo the concert in favor of a peaceful evening reminiscing upon old times. The point is simply that the decision can be removed only by another decision. It has a permanence that deliberation does not exhibit, although it does not yet have the permanence of actual existence. Once setting an end, we stick with it, unless we become persuaded that it is not worth pursuing. In short, a habitual order remains unless we make an act of removing it.[24] Aquinas describes the sinner who has not yet developed an ingrained habit of sinning as follows:

McNicholl also seems to defend the notion of negative causality through a habitual order ("The Ultimate End of Venial Sin," 384); his descriptions of it, however, convey some kind of positive causality (387), and in the end he reduces it to a mediated causality (388) that is hard to distinguish from a virtual order as applied to meritorious good actions. See also Deman, "Péché véniel et fin dernière," 240.

[22] De Letter, "Venial Sin and Its Final Goal," 51–53. He concludes his criticism by noting that venial sins being apart from the law "means nothing else than that the venially sinful act leaves unaltered a sinner's habitual disposition toward the ultimate end." (53) The negative idea of not altering an ordering might do well for John of St. Thomas.

[23] For a good treatment of how we form and change plans, see Michael E. Bratman, *Intentions, Plans, and Practical Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987). He treats the stability of plans – how they remain unless overturned – under that heading of "commitment" (see especially 15–18, 30–49, 60–75, 107–110).

[24] A possible exception might be negligent omissions; see Michael Barnwell, *The Problem of Negligent Omissions: Medieval Action Theories to the Rescue* (Leiden: Brill, 2010). Even in that case, however, it seems that the agent at least decides to risk giving up the end.

> The will of the sinner, having abandoned the unchangeable good, adheres to a changeable good as to an end, and the power and inclination of this adhering remains in it until it inheres once again in the unchangeable good as in an end.[25]

What kind of causality does such an end exert? Positively, it leads us to do certain things and avoid others. The goal of losing weight might lead someone to eat certain foods and not to eat other foods. This positive causality transforms the order from habitual to virtual (or actual), in which the connection to the end has been worked out, sometimes through multiple steps.

Actions will relate to any given end in three possible ways: some contribute to the end, others are inconsistent with the end, and still others are neither, that is, they do not contribute to the end but neither are they inconsistent with it. Buying a ticket contributes to going to the concert; going to the basketball game, which begins at 7 PM, is inconsistent with it; eating at Tony's restaurant at 5 PM does not contribute to it but neither is it inconsistent with it.

The end clearly exerts causality upon the first two kinds of action. Those that contribute to the end are good or desirable; those that are inconsistent with it are evil or to be avoided. The end not only characterizes these actions as desirable or to be avoided; it also causes desire or impetus. Because Kenny has set the end of going to the concert, he desires to buy the ticket; because he has set the end, he wishes to avoid the basketball game. In these situations, the order to the end does not remain habitual but becomes virtual.

In contrast, the end exerts no positive causality upon the third category of actions. The goal of going to the concert leads Kenny neither to desire to go to Tony's nor to avoid going to Tony's. Nevertheless, the goal might be said to exert a kind of negative causality. By *not* characterizing the action as desirable or as to be avoided, the end gives to the action the character of being possible (in relation to the end in view). Going to Tony's restaurant is something that Kenny can do. This characterization is in fact negative; chiefly, it means that the action does not belong to the category of things to be avoided; also it means that it does not belong to the category of things to be pursued (or it would be more than possible; it would be desirable).

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[25] *QDV*, q. 24, a. 12, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.3: 717, ll. 356–360): "voluntas tamen peccantis derelicto incommutabili bono bono commutabili quasi fini adhaesit; et huius adhaesionis vis et inclinatio in ea manet quousque iterato bono incommutabili quasi fini inhaereat."

If Kenny decides to go to Tony's restaurant, then his action is ordered habitually to the goal of the concert; it has no actual or virtual order – no positive relation at all – to this goal. The relation is incidental.[26] Because Kenny himself is related to the goal of going to the concert, all of his actions are also related to this goal, simply by the association with him. In a similar way, we say, with respect to efficient causality, that the musician built the house, when the carpenter happens to be a musician.[27] Going to Tony's restaurant is ordered habitually to going to the concert, because the person who goes to the restaurant happens to be ordered to go to the concert. This third category of actions, then, is said to be ordered habitually to the end because the person is ordered habitually to the end.[28] On account of the order of the person, the end exerts a kind of negative causality upon the action, neither characterizing it as "impossible" nor as "desirable," thereby by default making it to be "possible."

It is worth noting that the word "possible" has a broader meaning that includes both the first and the third category of actions. If Kenny can drive to the concert or take the subway, then these actions are both "possible." In its broadest meaning, "possible" simply means that an action is consistent with the end or goal; it does not eliminate the goal. Some "possible" actions are also desirable (in relation to the goal), such as taking the subway to get to the concert, while other "possible" actions are not desirable (in relation to the goal), such as going to Tony's restaurant. Both kinds of possible actions are characterized negatively, as not belonging to the category of actions to be avoided. Those actions that are also desirable, however, do have positive causality from the goal. In contrast, actions in the third category (which might be called "merely possible") have negative causality on both accounts: the agent is not induced to avoid them, since

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[26] McNicholl describes it as *per accidens* in "The Ultimate End of Venial Sin," 387. Grisez supposes that the relation must be per se, because he identifies habitual order with a virtual order in "The True Ultimate End of Human Beings," 45. Ryan makes the same claim in "Must the Acting Person Have a Single Ultimate End?" 350–352.

[27] See, for instance, *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 14.

[28] Aumann, "Venial Sin," 81, explains: "Venial sin is not ordained to God by reason of its nature as a sinful act, but by reason of the person who performs the sinful act." *ST* I-II, q. 88, a. 1, ad 3, is sometimes cited as the one text where Aquinas clearly indicates that the action, rather than the person, is habitually ordered to God. Surely, however, habitual order can still be primarily concerning the individual will yet concerning the action by association. Another indication that habitual order is by way of association with the individual – rather than by a per se link with the action itself – is found in the good actions of people in the state of mortal sin. Although the person has an evil end, his good actions do not become evil as long as he does not act out of the evil end; otherwise, all actions of such individuals would be mortal sins. The good actions, while not sinful, are done "with sin," that is, they are associated, by habit, with the evil end of the sinner. See Osborne, "The Threefold Referral of Acts," 722–723.

they do not remove the end, but neither is he led to pursue them, since they do not promote the end.

In relation to the ultimate end, venial sins belong to the third category of actions, those that are merely possible. They do not promote the end, so that they are not desirable; on the other hand, they do not destroy our order to the end, so avoiding them is not necessary.[29] Of course, venial sins have something of the character of "undesirable," in a way that going to Tony's restaurant does not (in relation to the goal of the concert). Nevertheless, they are not "undesirable" in the strict sense that they must be avoided; consequently, they are possible.

We might modify the example somewhat to parallel venial sins more closely. Perhaps going to Tony's restaurant will give indigestion, which will diminish the enjoyment of the concert. Going to Tony's restaurant, then, is still possible in relation to the end, although it does reduce the most complete realization of the end. The characterization of "possible" still results from a kind of negative causality. Similarly, the ultimate end characterizes venial sin as possible, as something that can be chosen while still maintaining the order to the end.

Aquinas clearly places mortal sins in the second category of actions and venial sins in the third:

> Deliberation can concern an action that is in all ways contrary to the end, so that if it is performed then it is impossible to come to the end; these actions are mortal sins […]. Deliberation can also concern that which does not exclude the end but nevertheless the end can be attained better without it, since it impedes progress to the end or disposes to a contrary end; these actions are venial sins, as when someone says an idle word, even after he has recognized that a venial sin disposes him to a mortal sin and is in some manner deficient from the rectitude of justice, which leads to God.[30]

Aquinas himself does not speak of negative causality but he does describe a habitual order to God in negative terms: "Someone places his whole heart habitually in God when he thinks and wills nothing that is contrary

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[29] *QDM*, q. 7, a. 1, ad 22 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 161, ll. 503–505): "aliud est non ordinari in Deum, quod conuenit ueniali, et aliud est excludere ordinem ad Deum, quod conuenit mortali."

[30] *QDM*, q. 7, a. 5, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 173, ll. 186–198): "deliberationem acceptatur aliquid quod est omnino contrarium fini, ut eo posito non possit ad finem perueniri, et tunc est peccatum mortale […]. Cum uero acceptatur aliquid quod non excludit finem set tamen sine eo melius ad finem perueniri possit quia in aliquo retardat a fine uel disponit ad contrarium finis, tunc est peccatum ueniale: puta, cum aliquis dicit uerbum otiosum, etiam deliberans quod est peccatum ueniale disponens ad mortale et in aliquo deficiens a rectitudine iustitie que ducit ad Deum." See also *QDM*, q. 7, a. 1, ad 22.

to divine love."[31] Furthermore, he says that venial sin is not against the law but apart from the law, an expression that seems to express an absence, or the lack of connection with the law.[32] The law is a directive of reason, ordering to the end.[33] Consequently, those things that destroy the end are to be avoided and can be said to be against the law. Those things that help attain the end can be said to be according to the law. But those things that neither destroy the end nor promote the end cannot be described either as against the law or as according to the law. They are, rather, apart from the law.

It is also easy to see why Aquinas says that venial sins do not concern a disorder with regard to the end but a disorder with regard to those things that are ordered to the end. Venial sins do not belong to those actions that destroy the end, so they are not disordered with regard to the end, but neither do they belong to those "possible" actions that promote the end. Nevertheless, they are pursued as if desirable, wherein lies a fundamental disorder: to pursue (and therefore to treat as if ordered to the end) that which is not ordered to the end. It would be as if Kenny claimed that the only thing he wanted in life was to go to the concert; when asked why he went to Tony's restaurant, he replies only that "at least it still allows me to go to the concert." That explains why he did not avoid Tony's restaurant, but it in no way explains why he pursued it.[34]

The ultimate end poses a special difficulty. Kenny can recognize that going to Tony's restaurant is merely possible in relation to his plan to go to the concert while at the same time perceiving the action as "desirable" in relation to some other end, for example, the end of enjoying food. In contrast, the ultimate end leaves no alternative. It is as if Kenny had only the end of going to the concert; then he would never be led to desire to go to Tony's restaurant, which has the character of being merely possible in relation to this end.

So it is for the ultimate end. All that we desire is supposed to be desired insofar as it relates to the ultimate end.[35] By the very nature of the will we order all of our actions to some one ultimate end. No desire of the will can arise apart from the ultimate end sought. If venial sin belongs to the

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[31] *ST* II-II, q. 24, a. 8, c. (*Editio Leonina*, VIII: 190–191): "habitualiter aliquis totum cor suum ponat in Deo, ita scilicet quod nihil cogitet vel velit quod sit divinae dilectioni contrarium."

[32] *QDM*, q. 7, a. 1, ad 1.

[33] See *ST* I-II, q. 90, a. 1 and a. 2.

[34] Ryan rightly argues that the negative causality involved in a venial sin does not explain what positive final causality gives rise to the action; see Ryan, "Must the Acting Person Have a Single Ultimate End?" 353.

[35] *ST* I-II, q. 1, a. 6.

category of "merely possible" in relation to the ultimate end, then it will never be desired, unless of course some new ultimate end is sought, in relation to which the action is "desirable." But if there is a new ultimate end, then the old end is abandoned, and the action becomes a mortal sin rather than a venial sin. Venial sins, it seems, are an impossibility. This appearance of impossibility can be dispelled only by better understanding the will and its object.

The will and the good

Aquinas sometimes says that the object of the will is the ultimate end, but more often he says that it is the good in general.[36] He does not mean some abstract notion of the good that would include the good of trees, beetles, and squirrels. Rather, he means the *human* good in general, or even *my* good in general: by nature we seek with our wills what is our good. We seek not just this or that particular good, such as the good of knowledge or the good of health, but our good in general, including both knowledge and health and other goods as well.

Grisez and those who follow him in advocating the new natural law theory have emphasized that we immediately apprehend certain basic human goods.[37] One can acknowledge that Grisez is correct on this point without adopting the new natural law theory, with its supposition that these basic goods are apprehended apart from knowledge of nature. What matters for our purposes is that this apprehension includes the notion of being the good of the person. I do not apprehend as good simply knowledge, in some abstract fashion; I apprehend knowledge as a good of mine, a good of me as a person.

I cannot develop the point, but it is worth noting that this observation concerning our knowledge of the good does not imply egoism.[38] Just

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[36] Aquinas says that the object of the will is the ultimate end in *QDV*, q. 6, a. 2, and *ST* III, q. 1, a. 8, arg. 3. He says that it is the end, the good, or the good in common in several places, including *ST* III, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2; *ST* III, q. 1, a. 1; *SCG* I, c. 72, n. 6; *QQ* VIII, q. 9, a. 1; *ST* III, q. 1, a. 3; *SCG* III, c. 1, n. 3; *QDC*, q. 1, a. 3; *ST* III, q. 13, a. 5, ad 1; *ST* III, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3; *ST* III, q. 9, a. 1; *ST* III, q. 10, a. 1; *ST* I, q. 82, a. 4. He also sometimes identifies the object of the will as beatitude or happiness, as in *ST* III, q. 3, a. 4, ad 2; *SCG* III, c. 26, n. 10; *QDV*, q. 23, a. 4.

[37] See Germain Grisez, "The First Principle of Practical Reason: A Commentary on the *Summa Theologiae*, 1–2, Question 94, Article 2," *Natural Law Forum* 10 (1965): 168–201; see also Germain Grisez, Joseph Boyle, and John Finnis, "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 32 (1987): 99–151.

[38] For this point, see Thomas M. Osborne, Jr., *Love of Self and Love of God in Thirteenth-Century Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), especially 69–113; Pierre Rousselot, *Pour L'histoire du problème de l'amour au Moyen Age* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Buchhandlung,

because I always apprehend a good as good insofar as it belongs to me, it does not follow that I seek only my good. My good – the good of my person – need not be solitary; it can be a shared good. Initially, perhaps, I apprehend knowledge as a good that fulfills me as an individual, but with time I perceive that I do not possess this good simply as solitary; I possess it together with others, and as such I can seek it both for myself and for others. With time I may come to perceive that all of my goods are realized most completely in God himself, so that "my good" is most of all God's good.[39]

At any rate, each individual good is perceived as good only as belonging to some overall good: my good or the good of the person or some such thing.[40] This greater good may be rather nondescript: I may not have any clear notion of what this overall good is. I know simply that each good is good insofar as it belongs to me, and that I, being one or a unit, must have some unified good. This claim, as simple as it may be, is the exact antithesis of the claim of the new natural law theory that the basic goods are incommensurable.[41] According to this theory, we can choose to place basic goods within a broad overarching good, such as integral communal fulfillment, but we need not.[42] For Aquinas, there is no option. The basic goods, from the very beginning, are perceived as belonging to my good, and since I am one – a unity – so also is my good one. When the basic goods are treated as isolated entities, Aquinas's teaching on venial sin and on the ultimate end cannot be understood. By their nature, the basic goods belong to something greater, even if that something greater is rather ill defined.

The new natural law theory emphasizes that these goods are good in themselves, that is, they are not good merely by utility. Health is good in itself; medicine is good merely by utility. Understanding the truth is good in itself; the computer used to learn some truth is a mere utility. In order to avoid reducing these goods to utilities must we resort to the account of the new natural law, in which these basic goods are isolated, each entirely

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1908); David M. Gallagher, "Thomas Aquinas on Self-Love as the Basis for Love of Others," *Acta Philosophica* 8 (1999): 23–44.

[39] Aquinas explains love of God in terms of a part/whole relationship, in which the divine good is the whole to which the particular good of the individual belongs. One's own good, then, is found most of all in the divine good. See, for instance, *ST* II-II, q. 60, a. 5; *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 3; *ST* II-II, q. 26, a. 3. For treatment of the concept, see Osborne, *Love of Self and Love of God*, 69–112.

[40] *QDM*, q. 7, a. 10, ad 9.

[41] Grisez *et al.*, "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends," 110.

[42] Grisez, "The True Ultimate End of Human Beings," 56–57.

independent of the others? Not according to Aquinas. Indeed, these goods are good only insofar as they are ordered to the ultimate end.

Each fulfills or completes some aspect of the human person, and as such it is ordered to the good of the whole person. The human person has diverse powers and natural inclinations, and what fulfills these inclinations is good.[43] Nevertheless, the inclinations are the inclinations of the person, and the person is one person, not an aggregate. These goods, then, are not good simply because they fulfill an inclination; they are good because they fulfill an inclination *of the person*. As such, they are good as parts of the good of the whole person. By their very notion, then, they are ordered to the good of the whole. Only as such is the will inclined to them. As Aquinas puts it,

> With the will we desire not only those things that pertain properly to the power of the will; we also desire those things that pertain to individual powers and to the whole human being. It follows that human beings naturally will not only the object of the will but also other things that are fitting to the other powers, for example, knowledge of the truth, which is fitting to the intellect, to be and to live, and other things of this sort, which refer to one's natural existence. All of these fall under the object of the will as certain particular goods.[44]

Is Aquinas saying that these particular goods are good only insofar as they are ordered to the beatific vision, which is the ultimate end? Or is he saying that they are good simply insofar as they are ordered to the good of the whole person, whatever that may be? In this passage, he seems to be saying the latter. The ultimate end, in this context, is the complete good of the person; it is nothing so determinate as the beatific vision.

Aquinas distinguishes between the formality of the ultimate end and that in which it is found, a distinction that is central to many Thomistic solutions to the problem of venial sin.[45] The formality is simply that which completes the whole person, or the whole completion of the person; that in which it is found is something more determinate, namely, the beatific

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[43] *ST* I-II, q. 94, a. 2.

[44] *ST* III, q. 10, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, VI: 83): "Non enim per voluntatem appetimus solum ea quae pertinent ad potentiam voluntatis; sed etiam ea quae pertinent ad singulas potentias, et ad totum hominem. Unde naturaliter homo vult non solum obiectum voluntatis, sed etiam alia quae conveniunt aliis potentiis, ut cognitionem veri, quae convenit intellectui; et esse et vivere et alia huiusmodi, quae respiciunt consistentiam naturalem; quae omnia comprehenduntur sub obiecto voluntatis, sicut quaedam particularia bona." See also *QDVCom*, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2.

[45] *ST* I-II, q. 1, a. 7. See Garrigou-Lagrange, "La fin ultime du péché véniel," 315, and McNicholl, "The Ultimate End of Venial Sin," 396–406, although the latter adds a distinction between the good in general and the formality of the last end.

vision. Because this distinction will recur repeatedly in the subsequent dis-
cussion, I will adopt the convention of referring to the formality as the
"overall good," while I will refer to that in which the ultimate end is found
as the "final end"; the term "ultimate end" will be used more broadly to
include both the overall good and the final end.

The distinction arises because we often pursue goods with only a gen-
eral idea of what they are; with time we come to a more determinate
notion. Someone might seek knowledge of black holes, for instance,
with no clear idea of what he will find. Someone might seek "to get
a job" without knowing any details of what kind of job or where it is
located.

On Aquinas's account the overall human good is found in the vision
of God, but an individual does not begin knowing this highly particular
conclusion. At first he pursues each individual good only as belonging
to his united good, whatever that might be. He may not know that this
overall good is found, as Aquinas says, in the highest act of his highest
power.[46] He might mistakenly suppose that his overall good is to be found
in an aggregate of individual goods. He probably will not know what is
the highest power, nor what is its highest act. Such knowledge will come
only with time. That does not prevent him from seeking, from the very
beginning, the united good of the person. Every good that he pursues
must be pursued under this formality.[47]

That is what Aquinas means when he speaks of the nature of the will
and its object: the will is directed to the overall good of the person. The
will is the power that corresponds to the whole person.[48] It may turn out
that this overall good is found in something rather particular, such as the
beatific vision, but this more precise determination does not belong to
the object of the will. All human beings seek – by their very nature – the
same general formality of the complete good of the person, but some

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[46] *ST* I-II, q. 3, a. 5.
[47] Ryan ("Must the Acting Person Have a Single Ultimate End?" 331) is correct when he states that
Aquinas thinks not only that we seek our complete perfection; he also maintains that we must seek
it in something or other, since a determination must be made, for this pursuit as for all others.
Ryan is not justified in concluding that we never desire our complete perfection without any deter-
mination (333). We must begin with the general before we move to the determination. Nor should
Ryan's point obscure the fact that the main point Aquinas is trying to make in *ST* I-II, q. 1, a. 5, is
that we must seek our complete perfection. Garrigou-Lagrange notes that we can indeed seek an
ultimate end in general; see Garrigou-Lagrange, "La fin ultime du péché véniel," 316.
[48] *QDV*, q. 22, a. 5, ad 3 (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.3: 624, ll. 238–243): "intellectus enim etsi habeat
inclinationem in aliquid non tamen nominat ipsam inclinationem hominis, sed voluntas ipsam
inclinationem hominis nominat. Unde quicquid fit secundum voluntatem fit secundum hominis
inclinationem."

people seek this in pleasure, others in riches, and still others in the bea-
tific vision.[49]

> Every rational mind naturally desires happiness in a universal and indeter-
> minate manner, and concerning this end it cannot fail, but the motion of
> the will of a creature is not determined in particular to seek happiness in
> this or that thing.[50]

De Letter thinks that the overall good, or the formality of the ultimate
end, is a mere abstraction, which must be applied to something concrete;
as such, it cannot be desired; only the final end can be desired (insofar
as it falls under the formality).[51] Garrigou-Lagrange correctly notes, how-
ever, that even the overall good is desired as a concrete reality, although it
is known only under a very broad abstract description.[52] The final end is
simply a determination of the overall good.

   In our deliberations, we typically proceed from a more general consid-
eration to a more precise determination.[53] Someone might begin by seek-
ing the largest diamond in the world; he then discovers that this is realized
in the Golden Jubilee diamond, which he now pursues. He has moved
from the formality (the largest diamond) to that in which it is found (the
Golden Jubilee). Someone might seek a high paying job, and then dis-
cover that actuaries get paid well; consequently, he seeks to become an
actuary. He has moved from the formality to that in which it is found.
This determination can take several steps. Someone might begin seeking
an enjoyable evening out; he then determines that a concert would be
enjoyable; finally, he determines that the concert at 8 PM at Jones Hall is
the most enjoyable concert.

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[49] *ST* I-II, q. 1, a. 7.

[50] *QDV*, q. 24, a. 7, ad 6 (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.3: 698, ll. 214–219): "felicitatem indeterminate et in
universali omnis rationalis mens naturaliter appetit, et circa hoc deficere non potest, sed in particu-
lari non est determinatus motus voluntatis creaturae ad quaerendam felicitatem in hoc vel in illo."

[51] De Letter, "Venial Sin and Its Final Goal," 36, n. 15. Consequently, he concludes that by denying
a final end for venial sins, we must deny any ultimate end for venial sins (see 34, n. 8). McNicholl
("The Ultimate End of Venial Sin," 374) also seems to think that happiness in general is a mere
abstraction that cannot be desired as such. Later, however, he speaks of a formal last end. This
formal last end is not a mere abstraction, but the concrete reality to which it applies is vague and
confused (403). He acknowledges that we seek an end that is "not any one definite being or reality,
but a rather confused and indeterminate complexity […]. We would call it man's supreme good"
(383). It seems to me that McNicholl's distinction between the good in general and the formal last
end is unnecessary. Deman ("Péché véniel et fin dernière," 243) also thinks that the good in general
cannot be willed.

[52] Garrigou-Lagrange, "La fin ultime du péché véniel," 315.

[53] Bratman, *Intentions*, 17; see also Scott MacDonald, "Ultimate Ends in Practical Reasoning: Aquinas's
Aristotelian Moral Psychology and Anscombe's Fallacy," *The Philosophical Review* 100 (1991): 31–66,
at 59–60.

Similarly, we begin by seeking our good. We then realize that our good is not found in an aggregate but in some highest good to which the other goods are ordered as toward an end. Next, we determine that this highest good must be our highest activity. We then determine that our highest activity is intellectual activity. Finally, we determine that the highest object of the intellect is God. We have moved from the formality of the ultimate end to the more precise determination, namely, that knowledge of God is our final end.

The difference between the formality and the determination is not stark. It is not as if the former refers to a mere abstraction and the latter to something entirely concrete. Both refer to a concrete reality at varying levels of abstraction. "My good" is still a concrete reality, even if all I know about it is that it is my overall perfection. "The vision of God" is still an abstraction from the full detail of the concrete reality; it does not include, for instance, the exact time of its realization.

The basic goods recognized by adherents of the new natural law theory, then, should not be conceived as isolated; rather, by their very notion they belong to the good of the person. We do not initially conceive them as being ordered to some determinate final end, but we do conceive them as being ordered to the overall good of the person, which is a kind of indeterminate end for the whole person. These basic goods are not, thereby, mere utilities. They are inherently good, completions of the person, but for this very reason they are also inherently ordered to a united good, of which they are parts.

As the ultimate end is known more precisely, the particular goods must be ordered to this more determinate final end. Knowledge is good in itself, because it completes an aspect of the whole person. Still, not every act of knowing will be good when considered in light of the end of the beatific vision. Some acts of knowing, for instance, will be idle and fruitless, having no order to the more precise ultimate end; as such, these acts of knowing will be more apparent goods than true goods.[54] What is inherently good by its order to the whole good of the person, then, must still be ordered within this overall good. Contemplating the truth is inherently good, but it is not good when the house is burning down.

These clarifications concerning the will and its proper object will prove essential to a solution of the problem of venial sin and the ultimate end, but for the moment they appear to have accentuated the problem. Kenny can choose to go to Tony's restaurant, even though this action in no way

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[54] See *ST* II-II, q. 167, a. 1.

contributes to his goal of going to the concert. Why? Because he has multiple motivations, some of which have nothing to do with the concert. Evidently, this option is unavailable for venial sins. The very nature of the will demands a solitary motivation; all that we do must be ordered, at least virtually, to the ultimate end. An action lacking this order cannot even be an act of will. Unfortunately, venial sins do lack this order.[55] They can be ordered to God only habitually, and they have no creature as a final end. Since every action must be motivated by some ultimate end, nothing can motivate venial sins; no agent – at least no agent in a state of grace – will ever have a reason to choose a venial sin.

Defective reasoning

Aquinas says that all of our actions must be ordered at least virtually to the ultimate end;[56] he also says that venial sins cannot be ordered actually or virtually to the ultimate end.[57] Both these statements can be true only if a shift in meaning has occurred between the two. A typical Thomistic response suggests that the meaning of "ultimate end" has shifted.[58] All of our actions, including venial sins, must be ordered at least virtually to the ultimate end considered as a formality, that is, considered as the overall good of the person. The order they lack is toward the final end, that is, the more determinate ultimate end, identified with the beatific vision.

On the face of it, the solution appears empty.[59] We can distinguish between the overall good and the final end, but in practice the two cannot be separated, at least once the agent has determined that his overall good

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[55] De Letter concludes that venial sins are not even fully human actions; see "Venial Sin and Its Final Goal," 35 and 59–62. Certainly, some venial sins are such because they are not fully deliberate; see *QDM*, q. 7, aa. 6 and 8. Others, however, are venial on account of their object, even when completely deliberate; see, for instance, *QDM*, q. 7, a. 3; see also *In Sent* II, d. 24, q. 3, qcl. 5, ad 2; *QDM*, q. 3, a. 12, ad 9. Contrary to the claim of De Letter, such actions seem fully human; indeed, they better deserve the character of a human act than do mortal sins, which have the perfect notion of sin. If some venial sins are human actions, then, it still remains that we must explain in what manner they have an ultimate end. McNicholl gives an account of venial sin within imperfect human actions, and then concludes, as we have, that the real difficulty concerns those venial sins chosen with full deliberation; see "The Ultimate End of Venial Sin," 378–381. See also Aumann, "Venial Sin," 81. This objection against De Letter is raised by Ryan, "Must the Acting Person Have a Single Ultimate End?" 353–354.

[56] *ST* I-II, q. 1, a. 6.   [57] *In Sent* II, d. 38, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4.

[58] For instance, a distinction within the ultimate end is made both by McNicholl, "The Ultimate End of Venial Sin," 396–405 and by Garrigou-Lagrange, "La fin ultime du péché véniel."

[59] De Letter goes so far as to say that such distinctions – and *every* other attempt at a solution to the problem – "give the impression of a merely verbal solution"; see "Venial Sin and Its Final Goal," 34, and also 36, n. 15.

is found in this final end. If someone knows that his overall good is to be found in the beatific vision, then he cannot pursue his overall good while performing an action that in no way promotes the beatific vision.

Suppose that the person seeking the largest diamond has discovered that it is to be found in the Golden Jubilee diamond. He now performs an action that in no way promotes his attaining the Golden Jubilee diamond. Can he claim, nevertheless, that he performs the action in order to attain the largest diamond? It would seem not, for he knows that the largest diamond is the Golden Jubilee diamond. What fails to get him closer to the Golden Jubilee diamond also fails to get him closer to the largest diamond. Similarly, the person who performs a venial sin cannot claim that he is motivated by his overall good, while realizing that the action he performs in no way promotes that in which his overall good is found.

Venial sins would indeed be impossible if the person committing the venial sin were clearheaded. Still, they might be possible if he were confused. Such confusion is precisely what we might expect, since Aquinas claims that every sin, whether mortal or venial, involves some kind of failure to advert to the truth, either full-fledged ignorance or at least an ignoring of the truth.[60] What kind of confusion would drive a wedge between the two senses of the ultimate end, the overall good and the final end?[61] The possibilities are multiple, but I wish to emphasize two causes of confusion: passion (or emotions) and habit.[62]

Passion can cause the individual to focus upon certain good features of an action, ignoring those that make it evil.[63] Aquinas gives the example of someone who fornicates out of passion. He focuses simply upon the pleasure of the action, and does not advert to the evil of fornication. On account of this voluntary ignorance (or ignoring), he chooses to sin. Fornication is a mortal sin. How might passion give rise to venial sin? First, it is important that the person is aware of the negative causality of the end, that is, he recognizes that the action is possible; it does not destroy the ultimate end. We are speaking of what is possible in the broad

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[60] *ST* II-II, q. 54, a. 1, ad 2. Also in *QDM*, q. 3, a. 8 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 83, ll. 105–106), Aquinas says that "omnis malus ignorans."

[61] In what follows I will not be considering sins that become venial because they lack deliberation entirely, since if anything, these sins would be more easily explained as arising from some kind of ignorance. See *QDM*, q. 7, aa. 5–6; *ST* I-II, q. 88, a. 2.

[62] McNicholl ("The Ultimate End of Venial Sin," 382) implies that the confusion arises because an individual is so harried with the concerns of life that he does not have time to think about God. Such absence of thought, however, could apply equally to many good actions, ordered virtually to God. Aumann holds a similar view; see Aumann, "Venial Sin," 82.

[63] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 9; *ST* I-II, q. 77, a. 2.

sense, the sense that includes the merely possible as well as those things that promote the good or goal. This recognition concerns the more determinate ultimate end, that is, what we have called the final end. The person knows, for instance, that telling a white lie will not destroy his final end; it will not force him to give up the order to God and the beatific vision.

While he is aware of the "possibility" of the white lie, his passions focus his attention simply upon the fact that the white lie promotes some aspect of the good of his person. He fails to consider, at the moment of choice, whether the lie is ordered toward his final end. It is not ordered against this more determinate good; this much he knows. But does it promote this good? At the moment of choice, he does not consider this matter; he considers only that the action is ordered to the overall good of his person.[64] He voluntarily ignores the relation of the action to the more determinate ultimate end, that is, to his final end.[65] What he knows, then, is that his action is possible; it does not destroy his final end. What he does not know is whether the action promotes his final end. He acts, then, while failing to order his action to the determinate end.

Where, then, does the motivation for venial sin arise? Kenny can choose to go to Tony's restaurant because he is motivated by more than the concert, but what motivates the person to choose to tell the white lie? He perceives something as inherently good, that is, as fulfilling of him as a person; it is good insofar as it is ordered to his whole completion or his overall good. If he were thinking clearly, he would proceed to consider whether this good really fits within his overall good as in fact it is found, that is, within his final end.

When passion intervenes, however, the person does not proceed to this further reasoning, or if he does, then under the force of the passion he ignores what he has considered. At the moment of choice he thinks only that this is good insofar as it is part of his overall good. If it is to be a venial sin, then he must retain one aspect of his deliberations: he must be aware that the action is possible, that is, it does not destroy his final end.

What motivates the venial sin, then, is something perceived to be inherently good but abstracted from its relation to the final end; or rather, abstracted from part of its relation.[66] The negative relation of "possible" is

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[64] For an account of how passion leads us to ignore various moral features of an action, see Steven J. Jensen, "The Error of the Passions," *The Thomist* 73 (2009): 349–379.

[65] This ignoring is possible because of our discursive reason, which can consider the means without considering the end; see De Letter, "Venial Sin," 36, 62–68.

[66] McNicholl describes this motive with the terms "temporal happiness" or "terrestrial happiness"; see "The Ultimate End of Venial Sin," 382, 392, and 383. Happiness seems to denote an end, not that which is ordered to the end, but McNicholl wishes to temper this impression by adding the word

kept in consideration; the positive relation of promoting (or not promot-ing) the ultimate end – as it is realized – is left out. This motivation begins as what Aquinas calls "*ad finem*," that is, as something ordered to the end, for it is perceived as good insofar as it is ordered to the overall good. How will the agent relate this inherent good to his final end? Possibly, he might identify it as his final end; he might suppose that the inherent good is the highest end to which all other goods should be ordered. In that case, he would commit a mortal sin.

For venial sin, however, the agent is aware that he can retain his final end while yet performing this action. The action and its good, then, remain at the level of "*ad finem*." Consequently, Aquinas says that venial sins concern that which is ordered to the end rather than the end itself. What motivates the sin is some good perceived as ordered to the agent's overall good, as consistent with his final end, but as abstracted from whether it actually promotes his final end. He desires it, then, as a means cut loose from the more determinate ultimate end. The intellectual con-fusion is found in this last element, and it is made possible, in this case, because the passions focus the attention, pressing for a choice even with-out the knowledge of whether the action promotes the final end.

For sins arising from a habit in the will, which can be either venial or mortal (in which case they are called sins of malice), the awareness can both be clearer and yet more confused.[67] The agent can be fully aware that the action in no way promotes the final end, and yet he chooses it. In this sense, he is more fully aware. At the same time, he is more con-fused, for he believes that an inherent good that does not promote the final end is desirable. How does he get to this state of confusion? Only by first developing a habit in his will. By repeatedly performing sins of pas-sion the sinner develops a habit in his will, an inclination to certain goods. If he repeatedly performs mortal sins, he develops a habit of desiring some goods as his more determinate ultimate end, as that toward which other goods must be ordered. If he repeatedly performs venial sins, however, he cannot develop such a habit, since the person does not desire the good as a final end.[68]

"temporal." He does seem to acknowledge that these "temporal" goods are desired as ordered to the overall good, or as he calls it, "our complete happiness, our full contentment" (383).

[67] See *QDM*, q. 7, a. 12, ad 4. *QDM*, q. 7, a. 5, arg. 8, clearly indicates that sins of malice are mortal sins, but in the reply to the objection Aquinas states that even when arising from clear deliberation, a sin can be venial. In *QDM*, q. 3, a. 12, ad 9, Aquinas says that when a venial sin is committed from the individual's own drive to it, it is not called a sin of malice, because it is not contrary to virtue.

[68] *QDM*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 9.

The habit he forms by repeated venial sins is a habit of desiring certain goods as not replacing his final end but also as not promoting his final end. These goods have a certain independence in his desires, but they still fall within the negative causality of the final end. Consequently, they are consistent with the habitual order to the final end, although they have no actual or virtual order to the final end.

This habit allows the individual to perform venial sins that do not arise under the influence of passion. As such, he sins with a clear insight into what he is doing. The person who commits a venial sin out of passion does not know whether his action promotes the final end, but he chooses nevertheless (because it is ordered, in itself, to his overall good). In contrast, the person who commits a venial sin out of habit knows full well that his action does not promote his final end. The person who sins from passion knows that his action is possible in the broad sense, that is, he knows that it does not exclude the final end, but he does not know whether it promotes the final end. In contrast, the person who sins from habit knows that his action is possible in the narrow sense, that is, he knows that it is *merely* possible; he knows that it does not oppose the final end but at the same time it does not promote the final end. Nevertheless, he can choose the action because he has developed a habit of desiring certain goods independently of the order to his final end, that is, without their positive dependence upon the final end, retaining only the negative dependence. He desires these goods not as ends but also not as promoting his final end. Of what is he ignorant? That these goods are not worth pursuing. Out of ignorance, he believes that it is more important to attain this good than it is to be ordered actually (or virtually) to his final end.[69]

From these two sources of confusion, many more sources might arise, giving rise to what Aquinas calls sins of ignorance.[70] The person might be ignorant that the action he performs is a venial sin, but this ignorance is itself voluntary, dependent upon some prior sin. He might be ignorant of some particular detail of the action that makes it sinful; again, this ignorance is itself voluntary.

We might concede this much to Grisez: if Aquinas thought that venial sins were performed with a completely clearheaded awareness of the relationship of the action to the final end, then Aquinas would indeed be inconsistent. Venial sins would make no sense. There would be no good

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[69] In *ST* I-II, q. 78, a. 1, Aquinas says that the person who sins from habit is ignorant of what good is to be preferred.

[70] *QDM*, q. 3, aa. 6–8; *ST* I-II, q. 76.

reason to perform them. Aquinas recognized, however, that venial sins, like sins in general, arise from some state of confusion. For this reason, Aquinas thinks that the angels, whether good or evil, can never perform venial sins. They are not susceptible to the kind of confusion that can give rise to venial sins. When they consider that which is ordered to the end, says Aquinas, they must at the same time consider it precisely with the end in view. They cannot drive a wedge, in their thoughts, between their overall good and their final end. For a similar reason Adam and Eve could not sin venially in the state of innocence. Their lower part was completely subject to the higher part, so, as long as their higher part remained fixed upon God as the ultimate end, they could make no mistakes with regard to those things ordered to the end. Only by first turning away from God, thereby severing the tight link between the higher and lower, could they sin venially.

Conclusion

What, then, is the ultimate end of an individual when he performs a venial sin? To what does he order his action? To this question, three answers can be given, corresponding to the three kinds of order: actual, virtual, and habitual. Actually, an individual need not order any action, including venial sins, to an ultimate end. He need think only upon some immediate end, such as avoiding embarrassment. This immediate end will make sense only on account of some virtual order to some further and ultimate end. Avoiding embarrassment can be perceived as good only insofar as it is ordered to the overall good of the individual. This order and this perception, however, need not be actually conscious at the moment.

Habitually, a venial sin can be ordered to the final end of the divine good. The habitual order is more an order of the individual than of the action itself. Although eating at Tony's restaurant in no way contributes to the goal of going to the concert, it can be ordered habitually to this goal, just so long as Kenny recognizes that the action is consistent with the goal. The habitual order remains until it is overturned by a contrary decision, for a habitual order simply reflects a goal that a person has set for himself. Similarly, a venial sin can be ordered habitually to the divine good, insofar as the sinner recognizes that the action is consistent with the final end. The action is not per se ordered to the end, as Grisez characterizes it, but only incidentally so, insofar as it is performed by an agent that is ordered to the end.

Grisez has misidentified habitual order, describing virtual order instead. His real problem, then, is with virtual order, and it is indeed in this order that the true difficulty of venial sin resides. To what ultimate end is a venial sin virtually ordered? It cannot be ordered to the final end of the divine good, either actually or virtually, for it in no way promotes the divine good, which promotion is necessary for any virtual order. Neither can it be ordered to the final end of some creature, or it would be a mortal sin.

We have reached the conclusion that venial sin is ordered to no final end, as we have defined the term, but it is nevertheless ordered to an ultimate end; it is ordered to no more particular determination of the ultimate end than simply the overall good of the person. This overall good is desired as concretely realized, but the concrete realization is given no clear determination, even as someone can desire to possess the largest diamond, without yet having clearly determined in what this goal will be realized. In short, the ultimate end to which a venial sin is virtually ordered is broader – or less determinate – than either the divine good or any good to be found in creatures.

Of course, in a venial sin, the individual always desires some particular good, such as his reputation, pleasure, and so on. He desires this good, however, only as ordered to the end, that is, as ordered to his overall good. He has recognized (probably at some previous time) that this good is – in itself – ordered to his overall good. What he fails to consider, right now, is that on account of particulars, this good is not ordered to his overall good as concretely realized. The sinner does not sit down and say "I want my overall good, in what can I find it?" Rather, he desires some inherent good and seeks to attain it. He thereby seeks his overall good (often virtually), since no one seeks an inherent good except as ordered to his overall good.

Grisez gives the example of a woman who tells a white lie in order to protect her relationship with her sister.[71] This relationship, says Grisez, is good in itself and is desired as an ultimate end. Grisez cannot avoid this conclusion, because he has characterized inherent goods as independent and incommensurable. In fact, every inherent good is good insofar as it is ordered to the good of the whole person. An inherent good, then, is inherently ordered to an end; it is not itself an ultimate end. It becomes so only when the individual perceives it as that in which his overall good is realized. In short, the woman does indeed intend the inherent good of the

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[71] Grisez, "The True Ultimate End of Human Beings," 45–46.

relationship with her sister; she does not intend it, however, as an ultimate end; rather, she intends it as ordered to her overall good.

We may conclude, then, that venial sins are possible in our current state, even though we must order all of our actions to some ultimate end. For venial sins, Aquinas insists, this order can only be habitual. We can now see that he might have added a further clarification: even venial sins are ordered *virtually* to our overall good. The possibility of venial sins depends upon a confusion, which separates this overall good from the final end of the vision of God, toward which venial sins cannot be ordered virtually.

The promise and pitfalls of glory: Aquinas on the forgotten vice of vainglory

Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung

The standard list of the seven deadly sins now includes pride, envy, sloth, greed, wrath, lust, and gluttony. The current list, however, is the product of several shifts over more than fifteen hundred years. The "deadly sins" were originally understood as "capital" or source vices; conceptions of many of these member vices have altered, sometimes dramatically (e.g., sloth); and the canonical list of seven once had eight (or nine) items, including the vices of dejection (*tristitia*) and vainglory (*vana gloria* or *inanis gloria*).[1] The story of this changing list of vices is also the story of how vainglory has been forgotten, even if, were it to be retrieved, the concept could articulate well the potential for disordered desires in a culture saturated with images, advertising, and opportunities for self-presentation via social media. In the *Quaestiones disputatae De malo*, Aquinas articulates a tradition of thought about vainglory that predates him by a millennium and offers an analysis of this vice that presents a persuasive case for its applicability yet today.

The list of capital vices originated in the 4th century A.D. with the desert fathers and mothers, who established monastic communities of "cells" in the barren wilderness of Egypt south of Alexandria. In this life of intentional spiritual discipline and soul care, fighting against temptation and receiving spiritual direction were central practices. What obstacles would they expect to encounter pursuing their vocation to be in closer communion with God? Early Christian desert experience taught that if a monk accepted and internalized certain *logismoi* (Evagrius of Pontus's original name for the vices) or demonic "suggestions," such thoughts would

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[1] For more background on the capital vices, see my *Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and Their Remedies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2009); for the changing conception of sloth over its history, see my "Resistance to the Demands of Love: Aquinas on *Acedia*," *The Thomist* 68 (2004): 173–204; "Aquinas on the Vice of Sloth: Three Interpretive Issues," *The Thomist* 75 (2011): 43–64; and "Sloth: Some Historical Reflections on Laziness, Effort, and Resistance to the Demands of Love," in *Virtues and Their Vices*, ed. Kevin Timpe and Craig A. Boyd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 177–198.

stir up the appetites and passions in ways that led to sinful actions and otherwise interfered with contemplation and "pure prayer." Following the example of Christ in his desert temptations (Matt. 4, Luke 4) and St. Antony, the pioneer of desert spirituality, the monk's goal was to reject and resist these demonic suggestions through reliance on the word of God.[2] If one's appetites led to action, the internalized suggestion could become a habit. The original list of vices was thus meant to name pervasive and perennial temptations anyone would likely encounter on such a quest for spiritual transformation. Evagrius of Pontus systematized the pastoral and practical wisdom of his mentors in his *Praktikos* and other works, and John Cassian, his disciple, used the same material to lay the foundations of Western monasticism in his *Institutes of the Monastic Life*.

The original list of eight *principia vitia* (principal or capital vices) that emerged from Christian desert practice not only included vainglory, but gave it a prominent place in two distinct ways. First, vainglory was the name given to Christ's temptation in the wilderness when the devil challenged him to throw himself down from the temple mount to prove that God would send angels to bear him up. So, of the main three temptations of Christ himself – in which his victory over temptation served as a direct counterpoint to the fall of Adam and Eve – vainglory makes the list. Hence Evagrius describes these three (gluttony, vainglory, and greed) as "gateway" vices, leading to the others.[3] Second, on John Cassian's alternate progressive account of the vices, vainglory is the penultimate vice on the list of eight, which culminates in pride. One starts by fighting gluttony, the vice with the most carnal object, then lust, and works up through greed, sloth, and the rest. After the first six have been successfully mastered through *askēsis*, however, the monk confronts the last two – vainglory and pride – which have wholly spiritual objects (glory and excellence, respectively). The danger of these last two vices is that they have the power to undercut all spiritual progress already accomplished. Cassian explains, "We fall into one of those six vices when we have been seduced by the one that comes before it, but we are in danger of falling into these two [vainglory and pride] when we are victorious, and, indeed, particularly

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[2] Evagrius's *Antirrhetikos*, a manual for combating demons with words from Scripture, following the example of Jesus in his desert temptations, is translated in Evagrius of Pontus, *Talking Back: A Monastic Handbook for Combating Demons*, trans. David Brakke (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications / Liturgical Press, 2009), 49–174.

[3] *On Thoughts*, 1, in *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, trans. Robert E. Sinkewicz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 153–154. Sometimes the final temptation is understood as a sin of pride, rather than greed. See Cassian on the same point: *Conferences*, I, V, vi, in *The Conferences*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), at 185–187.

after triumphs [i.e., against other sins]."[4] Evagrius likewise warns, "But the sharpest weapon of the beast is vainglory, which shoots down ascetic labors […]. Set the seal of silence on the spices of your ascetic labors, lest unfastened by your tongue they be stolen by esteem."[5] In vainglory, one can glory in one's spiritual progress so far, wanting to receive renown, and in pride one can attribute one's progress to one's own efforts, rather than to the grace of God. Whether it was placed at the beginning or at the end of one's spiritual journey, then, vainglory held a prominent place among the vices. Moreover, since St. Benedict included instructions for the regular reading of Cassian's *Institutes* in his *Rule*, vainglory's place on the list and its role in Christian spiritual formation was assured for centuries to come.

Why did it lose its place? As the text of the *QDM* makes evident, pride and vainglory are conceptually very close cousins. Several species of pride named by Gregory the Great and cited by Aquinas in *QDM*, q. 8, a. 4, look like cases of vainglory or its offspring vices (e.g., boasting and hypocrisy), as objectors note (obj. 1): e.g., people who "boast that they have what they do not have" and "desire to appear to have" unique or outstanding goods.[6] So Aquinas has some explaining to do in order to maintain Gregory's authority on the forms of pride. Aquinas elsewhere explains the differences between these two vices by means of their different objects – for example, at q. 8, a. 2, ad 7. He also argues that vainglory's object is directed toward the object and end of pride, since one can gain pre-eminence by means of praise. The connection also goes the other direction, however, since excellence and preeminence are natural causes of glory; that is, excellence's normal effect is to attract both attention and acclaim. In cases where pride indicates a disordered desire specifically for preeminence (rather than "diffusing its governance" as the "universal root of all sins," a role in which it functions as the source of the other capital vices), Aquinas argues that one can effectively substitute vainglory for pride as a "special sin"[7] on the list of capital vices.[8] Cassian and Gregory also describe these two vices in ways that seem occasionally to overlap. Moreover, as I will explain in a moment, hybrid cases of prideful vainglory may well be the most common manifestation of the two vices, in which

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[4] Cassian, *Conferences*, I, V, x.4 (Ramsey, 189).

[5] Evagrius, *Eulogios*, 14 (Sinkewicz, 41).

[6] *QDM*, q. 8, a. 4, arg. 1 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 206, ll. 7–9), citing Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, XXIII, c. vi, 13 (CCSL 143-B: 1153): "aut certe cum iactant se habere quod non habent, aut despectis ceteris singulariter uideri appetunt." Special thanks to Kendall Fisher (Syracuse University, ABD) for her assistance with translation.

[7] By "special" Aquinas means to indicate "of a distinct species."

[8] *QDM*, q. 8, a. 2, ad 16.

case both the phenomenon and the language used to describe it will also blur the lines between them. For these reasons, while there is merit in distinguishing the two vices, as Aquinas does in the *QDM*, one can imagine how difficult it might be to preach about them to uneducated lay audiences in the 13th century, in preparation for their annual confession as required by the Fourth Lateran Council[9] and to have the distinction stick.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will offer a definition and taxonomy of vainglory. Such a catalog will serve as a defense of its well-deserved place on the list of vices and the merit of distinguishing it from pride, given its diagnostic power to articulate disorders in human desires for attention and approval. As a capital vice, vainglory has both deeper roots in pride and various vices that it bears as its characteristic fruits. The authoritative voices in the historical story of vainglory focused on pride as the principal root of vainglory; however, its forms also include both defensive maneuvers (most notably, its indirect offspring vices) and much fakery and hypocritical concealment. For this reason, I will argue that much of the motivation for vainglory is better explained as arising from fear.

Given the prevalence of human temptations to become attached to attention and social approval in vaingloriously distorted ways, it is also worth examining practices of resistance and detachment from vainglory. The desert and monastic tradition suggests remedial spiritual disciplines such as silence and solitude that are still practicable today. I will turn to Augustine's *Confessions* and sermons for examples of what it looks like to struggle with vainglory in all of its forms. These sources also offer insightful suggestions about how creating a culture of good glory might be a communal practice that counters vainglorious temptation.

Currently, both the vice and its remedies have faded from view. As in the rest of the *QDM*, however, Aquinas's analysis and the tradition he creatively draws from readily suggest ways that these concepts can be usefully appropriated for contemporary moral thought and practice.

Varieties of vainglory

Vainglory is alternately known in medieval texts as *vana gloria* or *inanis gloria* – vain or empty glory (from the Greek *kenodoxia*). Aquinas treats

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[9] The Fourth Lateran Council (1215 A.D.), constitution 21, requires confession at least once a year. Siegfried Wenzel argues that this decree increased the number of sermons devoted to the seven capital vices; see his chapter "Preaching the Seven Deadly Sins" in *In the Garden of Evil: The Vices and Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Newhauser (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005), 145–169, especially 145–156.

the capital vices as he does all sin and vice, as a disordered inclination for something good. In the case of the capital vices, this disordered love becomes a fecund source of other sin and vice because one makes the created good in question bear the weight of something that one can use to provide happiness for oneself instead of acknowledging God as one's ultimate end. Hence the rootedness of these "happiness substitutes" in pride.[10] This pattern implies that glory is a genuine good for human beings and vainglory is a disordered desire for it or a disordered way of seeking it. This is a controversial assumption. While Greek and Roman cultures would unproblematically accept glory as a human good, some Christians might worry that glory is something due to God alone.[11] Aquinas handles this concern by noting that glory simply means "a certain manifestation of someone's goodness,"[12] or, as he puts it in the *ST*, "that somebody's good is noticed and approved by many."[13] When the spiritual or material goodness of someone or something is recognized with positive acknowledgment, on his definition, this counts as a case of glory. Examples include a glorious performance of a symphony or the glory of a beautiful sunset. In this usage, "glory" is not a term reserved only for the splendor of God himself, although clearly that is the paradigm case. The glory of other glorious things is, nonetheless, ultimately derivative, because their goodness participates in God who is the source of all goodness.

Vainglory's object (or matter) is thus attention, approval, and acknowledgment given for what is or appears good to one's audience. Being self-aware and capable of reflection makes vainglory possible for human beings even when one is alone, although the most common cases include conscious cultivation of the regard of others in a social setting. Not simply having an audience but being conscious of having one is what marks human experience. Vainglory requires that one consider how one appears to oneself and others and that one be capable of desiring and delighting in that attention and approval. While "glory" typically denotes situations of widespread publicity and a large audience, Aquinas, perhaps in deference to the desert fathers, is careful to include other cases, such as the regard of a few, or even just one other person, "or only towards one's own self."[14]

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[10] *ST* I-II, q. 84, a. 4.
[11] See *QDM*, q. 9, a. 2, arg. 6–7.
[12] *QDM*, q. 9, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 210, ll. 77–78): "quandam manifestationem alicuius in bono."
[13] *ST* II-II, q. 132, a. 1 (*Editio Leonina*, X: 78): "proprie per nomen gloriae designatur quod bonum alicuius deveniat in multorum notitiam et approbationem."
[14] *QDM*, q. 9, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 210, ll. 102–103): "uel ad se ipsum tantum."

Where real audiences are absent, one can substitute imaginary ones. Cassian recounts this cautionary tale from the desert fathers:

> I remember a certain old man from the time when I was living in the desert of Skete. He was going to a certain brother's cell to pay him a visit. When he got near the door he heard the monk inside muttering something. Wanting to know what he was reading from Scripture or what, as the custom is, he was going over from memory, the older man stood at the door for a little while. And when this most devout interloper focused his hearing and listened more carefully, he discovered that the younger monk within was so much at the mercy of vainglory's onslaught as to believe that he was in a church exhorting a congregation with a magnificent sermon. And when the old man, still standing near, heard him finish his discourse and then announce the dismissal of the catechumens, he at once knocked on the door. The younger monk came out, greeting the old man with the customary reverence and bringing him in. Since he realized that he had been caught up in a fantasy and was troubled by this, he asked how long ago the older man had come, knowing he would be scandalized if his brother had heard him "preaching." The older man replied in a pleasantly amused manner: "I only arrived […] when you were announcing the dismissal of the catechumens."[15]

Whether the vainglorious person uses actual or anticipated reactions from real audiences or from audiences that exist only in fantasy, his self-image is crafted in a social mirror.

What makes glory vain? Vainglory covers a variety of disordered desires, which are catalogued like other vices in terms of both their object and end. They include desires for (1) false things that "lack subsistence";[16] (2) transitory things that "lack solidity and stability";[17] and (3) things that "do not attain their appropriate end,"[18] such as labor done in vain. One can reduce these to two main cases: glorying "in vain or empty things," which covers both objects empty of all goodness and good objects that lack lasting value, and glorying "in vain," which covers anything one glories in for the wrong end. Vainglory's objects can include just about anything – real goods, apparent or faked goods, shallow and sensational goods, socially respectable goods, material or spiritual goods, and even evil, as long as it is impressive or outrageous enough to garner some positive attention (this category may include

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[15]   Cassian, *Institutes*, XI, xvi, in *The Institutes*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (New York: Newman Press, 2000), 246–247, with minor alteration.

[16]   *QDM*, q. 9, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 210, l. 107): "non habet subsistentiam."

[17]   *QDM*, q. 9, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 210, ll. 111–112): "non habet soliditatem uel firmitatem."

[18]   *QDM*, q. 9, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 210, ll. 115–116): "non consequitur finem debitum."

everything from talk-show tell-alls to gory spectacle). Glorying "in vain" is of special interest to the Christian tradition, since it typically includes instances in which one glories in goods of genuine value, including virtue. In the monastery, for example, that would be a more frequent and spiritually serious temptation than clamoring for sensational celebrity over worldly success.

In the first category, "vain or empty things," the limit case is pure fakery, that is, when one seeks attention for some good one pretends to have but actually does not have (or does not have in the measure one pretends to have it). Boasting and hypocrisy are vainglory's most easily recognizable offspring vices, and both cover many cases in this category. In contemporary culture, embellished resumes, exaggerated "glory stories" of one's past athletic achievements, and cosmetic enhancements and surgeries all count as examples of faked goods, paraded for others in order to appear acceptable or to gain their approval. Similarly, one could select props (jewelry, electronics, cars) to paint an image of an affluent lifestyle which is a sham, or use name-dropping and wisened looks to signal erudition where there is less than is advertised.

In other cases, one genuinely has the good in question, but one desires or loves the glory one receives for it disproportionately. These goods typically range from the completely shallow to the socially respectable. How much approving attention is an outrageous fashion statement or a wild tattoo worth? At a rock concert or political rally, how much screaming and applause is appropriate? An academic degree is an impressive achievement, but how much should it stroke one's ego to receive accolades for it? How much stock should one put into one's career success, and should that success be measured by how much others value it? Can a book be worth writing even if it does not get much attention or generate impressive sales?

To Aquinas's list of "vain things," I would add a last form of glorying: "notorious vainglorious." In this instance, the object gloried in is something admittedly evil that nevertheless elicits awe and admiration and secures an audience's rapt attention. Outrageously rebellious behavior has a "cool factor" that is hard to beat for attention-getting power; other times acts of lust or gluttony are so beyond the pale they rivet one to the television screen; and often sheer power – even if wielded with cold malice – commands respect, *Godfather*-style. For all these cases, and the ones perhaps closer to home, having the concept of vainglory in one's conceptual toolbox alerts one to the dangers both obvious and subtle that arise with awareness of how pleasing it is to win recognition for one's public image, whether put-on or not.

The second main form of vainglory includes glorying "in vain" and regards not the object gloried in, but the end toward which glory is directed. In this case, one may well receive glory for genuine goods, and proportionately so, but the glory is nonetheless problematic because it is ordered entirely to oneself. For Aquinas and his historical forbears, the goods one gloried in were often spiritual goods – one's progress in virtue, devotion to prayer, church leadership, or spiritual wisdom, that is, genuine goods with eternal significance – but they could still be valued for their potential to garner glory, rather than for their contribution to the community or to one's communion with God.

Aquinas, reflecting the Christian tradition preceding him, allows that glory may be desired not as an end but only as a means to the edification of others, the encouragement to persevere in one's own virtue, or God's glory (or all three at once).[19] As Augustine describes the Romans in the *City of God*, when human glory becomes the end of one's actions, even one's virtue-seeking becomes not merely disordered but idolatrous, so much so that the love of one's own glory over and above the glory of God is the distinguishing mark of the citizens of the *civitas mundi*.[20] Nonetheless, Augustine, whom Aquinas follows on this point, is clear that glory itself is a good thing: "If admiration is the usual and proper accompaniment of a good life and good actions, we ought not to renounce it any more than the good life which it accompanies."[21] As Augustine's profile of the Romans shows, the concern is that those who do achieve great excellence or virtue may well deserve the glory they receive and care appropriately for it initially, but with time, they may expect it as their due or become too attached to it. In this process, they lose their motivation for excellence as such and settle for a shallower end – namely, their own glory sought for its own sake. Many professional athletes or political figures today still find this an easy pitfall. For Jewish Pharisees, desert monks, and medieval religious alike, this was a worrisome and common spiritual danger.

In the *ST*, Aquinas does not treat the capital vices as a set as he does in the *QDM*. Rather, he organizes the ethical life around the seven virtues, adding in vices wherever they fit according to their objects. In *ST*, his account of vainglory comes at the end of a list of *three* vices of excess

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[19] *QDM*, q. 9, a. 1, c., ad 4 and ad 8; see also *ST* II-II, q. 132, a. 1, ad 3.
[20] *DCD*, XIV, c. 28.
[21] *Confessions*, X, c. xxxvii, in *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 215.

opposed to magnanimity, the virtue of stretching forth to great things that are properly due significant honor. The first vice of excess is presumption (*praesumptio*), an excessive sense of what is within one's power; then excessive ambition (*ambitiosa*), to be honored for one's achievements by those with expert judgment; and finally vainglory, the simple desire for fame and widespread acclaim (deserved or not).[22] Aquinas's implicit framing of vainglory as a slide from genuine goodness to empty glory-seeking shows that it is easy to get used to having attention and to have the desire for attention gradually undermine one's commitment to goodness. Hence the desert fathers conceived of vainglory as one of the most dangerous temptations, not for shallow celebrities, but for those who were the most mature in virtue, that is, those who had some genuinely remarkable goodness. Cassian writes,

> Other vices, as we have said, sometimes relent if the location is favorable, and they usually slacken and diminish if the matter of sin and the occasion for it and the possibility of it have been removed. But this one penetrates the desert along with him who is fleeing, and neither can it be excluded from a given place nor does it weaken if matter has been taken away. For in no other way is it enlivened than by the virtuous successes of the one whom it assails.[23]

Similarly, Augustine articulates the way vainglory threatens to undermine his attempts at true virtue in *Confessions* X:

> [T]he love of praise is a temptation to me even when I reject it, because of the very fact that I am rejecting it. Often the contempt of vainglory becomes a source of even more vainglory. For it is not being scorned when the contempt is something one is proud of.[24]

Although it may be easier to point a finger of judgment at public figures and their fame, Aquinas's tradition is concerned that this vice equally targets Christians who make progress in sanctity, for "while other vices find their abode in the servants of the devil, vainglory finds a place even in the servants of Christ."[25]

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[22] *ST* II-II, qq. 130–132.   [23] Cassian, *Institutes*, IX, viii (Ramsey, 243).

[24] Augustine, *Confessions*, X, c. xxxvii–xxxviii (Chadwick, 215–217). The desert fathers describe the same phenomenon by comparing vainglory to an onion – when one layer is peeled, that only reveals another layer of exactly the same temptation. See Cassian, *Institutes*, XI, v, (Ramsey, 242).

[25] The text is mistakenly ascribed to John Chrysostom (Homily XIII of *Opus Imperfectum in Mattheum*) in Aquinas, *ST* II-II, q. 132, a. 3, *sed contra* (*Editio Leonina*, X: 81): "cum cetera vitia locum habeant in servis diaboli, inanis gloria locum habet etiam in servis Christi."

The goodness of glory

In keeping with his metaphysical assumption of the primacy of goodness, Aquinas's catalog of what can go wrong when one desires glory in disordered ways presumes a picture of well-ordered glory. Disordered desire cannot be defined without a standard of goodness from which it deviates. Glory, like the objects of the other capital vices, is a good thing. In fact, Aquinas argues that the tendency to be communicated or to overflow – whether with respect to being (creation) or truth (revelation) or both – is a natural aspect of goodness itself.[26] What makes glory good? And what is good glory good *for*? First, glory bears witness to God as the source of all goodness; hence Aquinas's interpretation of the text, "Let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."[27] Further, glory can be sought for others' sake, who see one's goodness and are inspired and encouraged to imitate it. So, for example, parents and teachers of virtue model goodness for children and students, who learn by copying and are spurred on by observing others' success and good example. Aristotle and the Apostle Paul agree that putting into practice what one observes in others is a way to learn to become good. A model of virtuous habituation depends on just such manifestations of goodness, which "can edify [others] for good."[28] These cases of glory are themselves "virtuous and praiseworthy" according to Aquinas.[29] Finally, glory can even be good in the narrowest possible audience range: oneself. In this sort of case, says Aquinas, one's own goodness, when shown and known – even if only in one's own self-reflection or recollection – can move one to "persist more firmly" in virtue.[30] So giving one's testimony

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[26] *QDM*, q. 9, a. 1, ad 3: "Every perfect thing by nature communicates itself to others as much as possible, and this belongs to each thing because of its imitation of the first perfect thing, namely, God, who communicates his goodness to all things. But one's goodness is communicated to another with respect to both being and knowledge. Whence it seems to belong to a natural appetite that one wishes one's goodness to become known. If, therefore, one relates this [desire] to a due end, it will be virtuous, and if one does not, it will belong to vanity," (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 211, ll. 179–189): "unumquodque perfectum naturaliter communicat se aliis secundum quod possibile est, et hoc competit unicuique rei ex imitatione primi perfecti, scilicet Dei, qui bonitatem suam communicat omnibus; bonum autem alicuius communicatur aliis et quantum ad esse et quantum ad cognitionem, unde ad naturalem appetitum pertinere uidetur quod aliquis bonum suum innotescere uelit. Si igitur hoc referatur ad debitum finem, erit uirtutis; si autem non, erit uanitatis."

[27] Matt. 5:16.

[28] *QDM*, q. 9, a. 2, ad 9 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 214, ll. 251–251): "eos in bono edificare possit."

[29] *QDM*, q. 9, a. 2, ad 9 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 214, l. 252): "uirtuosum et laudabile."

[30] *QDM*, q. 9, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 211, l. 152): "firmius in eis persistit."

is beneficial to oneself as well as others, and the Ignatian practice of daily examen can likewise be an instance of good glory.

In q. 9, a. 1, Aquinas demarcates these and other virtuous expressions of glory according to the following criterion: the glory of a human being is well-ordered only as a *bonum utile*, a good that benefits oneself or others spiritually,[31] and never as an end in itself. That kind of glory belongs only to God. In a. 2, Aquinas notes that glory-seeking is disordered to the point of becoming a mortal sin when one makes human glory one's end to the extent that one is willing to disobey God's law in order to obtain it. Lesser cases involve desiring glory for some outstanding or superior human quality without (actually or habitually) referring that glory or goodness to God as its end. Aquinas uses the analogy of the honor and glory due a king versus that due a foot soldier to make the point about degrees of usurpation.[32] The most extreme case of disordered glory-seeking would involve directly and intentionally usurping the king's rightful glory. If, however, a soldier seeks his own glory through deeds of valor in battle, he might still be excessively attached to his own glory, for example, by showing off his great deeds or being disproportionately pleased by others' acclaim, even if this is not intended as a deliberate or direct affront to the king. On the other hand, should the soldier be decorated for his deeds, something is obviously lacking if he fails to pay heed to the context in which his goodness counts as worthy of praise, namely, a battle for the sake of the king and in service to his kingdom. In a variety of ways and in a range of degrees, then, glory can fail to be directed to God. For Aquinas, God wills that human goodness reflect his own, and proper glorying will respect that fact.

Roots and fruits of vainglory

When Gregory adapted John Cassian's list of vices, he made pride the "queen" of the remaining seven, a monarch in command of other generals (the other capital vices) who in turn gave orders to their foot soldiers (their offspring vices). Together they made up an "army" with orders to "lay waste" to one's "heart."[33] Medieval depictions of the vices as a tree similarly designated pride as the root of many other branches, each of

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[31] *QDM*, q. 9, a. 1, ad 4; *QDM*, q. 9, a. 1, ad 8 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 211, ll. 216–218): "Ad octauum dicendum quod iudicium bene opinantium de aliquo ita ad inanem gloriam perinet dum absque utilitate appetitur."

[32] *QDM*, q. 9, a. 2, ad 6.

[33] *Moralia in Iob*, XXXI, c. 45, 87–91 (CCSL 143-B: 1610–1613).

which bore its own distinctive poisoned fruit.[34] Each of these metaphors is evidence of an Augustinian theology in which pride was the original sin and prideful idolatry of the self or other created goods was both the source and template for all other vices in the human heart. According to Carole Straw, the Gregorian order of vices – beginning with the worst and most spiritual sin, pride, and descending into the carnal vices of gluttony and lust – bespeaks a "trickle down theory of sin" rather than a Cassianic "bubble up hamartiology" where the vices increase in gravity as one progresses through the list.[35] On Gregory's system, once one falls into pride from the full dignity of human nature as a creature made to live in spiritual communion with God, one is corrupted further and further until one becomes less than human, even bestial, habituated to sins (lust and gluttony) whose preoccupation is with bodily pleasure evacuated of its relationship to right reason. In the *QDM*, Aquinas follows the Gregorian order of the vices, which run from those with the most spiritual object to the most carnal object. Pride, as the head of the other capital vices, is therefore the implicit source and root of the others, including vainglory, the vice that most immediately follows it.

Pride is a disordered (because excessive) desire for excellence, where "to excel" carries a comparative judgment of superiority or greater status with it. Such excellence is typically attractive and noteworthy, hence its usual effects – honor (esteem, respect) and glory (widespread recognition and applause). Of course, outdoing others in receiving glory itself counts as another sort of excellence, and one that attracts attention, so the vicious cycle can spiral. Hybrid cases of these two vices are therefore both natural and common. Professional basketball players are genuinely proficient, but they also like to display that proficiency with breakaway dunks that win a huge round of applause; the evil queen in the fairy tale *Snow White* not only desires superiority in beauty, but needs this repeatedly and unqualifiedly affirmed for her by the magic mirror and her subjects; in one's career, one may feel that outstanding achievement is not as satisfying unless it is also marked by promotions, awards, and the notice of one's superiors. As a result, the two vices are easy to confuse.

It is important, nonetheless, to distinguish them, since the two can just as easily come apart. One thinks of important cases of pure pride, such as Nietzsche's *übermensch*, in which one's sense of superiority includes

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[34] See, for example, British Library, Arundel MS 83, f. 128v (www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanu-scripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=7111).

[35] Carole Straw, "Gregory, Cassian, and the Cardinal Vices," in Newhauser, *In the Garden of Evil*, 35–58, at 46.

despising opinions of the many and the vulgar; to have their approval, or even to desire it, would be a sign of one's lack of the very superiority to which one aspires.[36] (Aristotle's *megalopsychos* is, arguably, another such case.) On the other side of the spectrum, there are cases of pure vainglory, in which one does not aspire to real goodness, much less superiority, but only craves fame and the power of an empty name. In such cases, one will do whatever an audience requires to get attention. In short, pride is distinguished by the desire for competitive status and superior achievement – wanting to *be* better, while vainglory is about winning social approval and acclamation – wanting to *appear* in ways one's audiences will approve and applaud.

   Pride and fear are two common roots of vainglory. The tradition pays attention almost exclusively to vainglory that is motivated by pride. In what follows, I will argue that this focus overlooks a whole range of familiar cases that arise from a sense of "glory-neediness" rather than a self that feels "glory-worthy."

   The Christian tradition's authoritative sources – e.g., Gregory's four species of pride as quoted by Aquinas in *QDM*, q. 8, the steps of humility in Bernard of Clairvaux's *De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae*, Benedict's *Rule*, Cassian's *Institutes of the Monastic Life*, and stories teaching "that nothing should be done for show" in the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* – focus on vainglory's close relationship to pride, or in Cassian's organic metaphor, vainglory's prideful roots.[37] This makes sense if one identifies the vainglorious person's key mistake as taking glory in some goodness (ostensible or real) for oneself instead of directing attention and gratitude to God as its source and giver. The most morally grave form of vainglory – glorying "in vain," that is, in oneself as the ultimate source of one's goodness – is most obviously linked to a prideful usurpation of what is due to God. In monastic communities, normally the problem would not be that one attempted to get glory for sensational trivia or celebrity status, but that one would be tempted to glory in one's virtue, or spiritual progress, or holiness. Because these goods are received only by God's gracious gift, these are cases of hoarding glory for oneself that is due only to God.

   Pridefully-motivated vainglory finds ample illustration in the life and works of Augustine, who is, after Scripture and Gregory's *Moralia*, Aquinas's most important theological source on the subject. In the famous

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[36] I acknowledge that Friedrich Nietzsche himself might well think that pride is a category mistake here, since the overcoming man does not have the sort of self required for pride to apply, and further, his life rises above the categories of conventional morality, of which pride is a part.

[37] See *Conference* V, x (Ramsey, 189).

discussion of the Romans in *City of God*, Book V, a passage Aquinas quotes twice in *QDM*, q. 9, Augustine argues that their virtue and genuinely excellent achievements were spoiled by the motivation to win human praise: "Glory they most ardently loved; for it they lived, for it they did not hesitate to die." Indeed, "what else but glory should they love, by which they wished, even after death, to live on in the mouths of their admirers?" Augustine is clear that "the love of praise is a vice."[38] Moreover, in his *Confessions*, he describes his own prideful vainglory, first as a student and then as a teacher of rhetoric – in both roles more concerned with winning competitions to win applause than with the truth of his own speeches.[39] A self-described "salesman of words in the markets of rhetoric," Augustine exemplifies vainglory's effects for those of us who live in a culture in which marketing and self-marketing are perhaps even more pervasive temptations than for the Romans and rhetoricians of his own day.[40]

In contrast to pridefully-driven vainglory, what would vainglory motivated by fearfulness or an insecure sense of one's own goodness look like? In some respects, fearful vainglory lends itself to the limit form of glorying "in vain things" – when, to win the approval and attention of a desired audience, one puts on carefully crafted appearances of goodness that one knows are a sham. Whereas the offspring vice of boasting might be a signature mark of prideful vainglory, hypocrisy could serve as its correlate as a mark of fearful vainglory. Advertisers, especially in the cosmetic industry, do not have much use for consumers who have a secure (much less overinflated) sense of their own goodness. Rather, they target those who think they lack goodness and must masquerade in public as being more or better than they actually are. The fearfully vainglorious may be overly dependent on social approval and therefore use masks and props to conceal true information or promote false information about themselves. Their public appearances are designed for the presentation of a fake or embellished self.

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[38] Augustine, *DCD*, V, c. 12, in *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Modern Library, 1993), 159–163.

[39] In the *Confessions*, Augustine is clearly ambitious for excellence, but like the Romans, he reveals his persistent need for praise and approval from others in his pursuit of it. As a student in Carthage, he admits, "I was already top of the class in the rhetor's school, and was pleased with myself for my success and was inflated with conceit […]. I wanted to distinguish myself as an orator for a damnable and conceited purpose, namely delight in human vanity" (*Confessions*, III, c. iii–iv, Chadwick, 38); see also I, c. xviii (Chadwick, 20–21). In Book IV, c. i, he describes his years as a teacher of rhetoric this way: "Publicly I was a teacher of the arts which they call liberal; privately I professed a false religion – in the former role arrogant, in the latter superstitious, in everything vain" (Chadwick, 52).

[40] Augustine, *Confessions* Book IX, c. ii (Chadwick, 155).

When Aquinas discusses the virtue of truthful self-presentation in *ST* II-II, qq. 109–111, he explicitly names vainglory as the source and end of vices undercutting truthfulness, citing Gregory. Both overexaggeration of the goodness of one's true self, and the defensive cover-up of an inadequately good self can exhibit the same underlying vice. Again, Augustine provides an illustration that also prompts reflection on contemporary manifestations of vainglory. Take his theft of the pears with teenage friends, an experience that taught him that "[f]riendship can be a dangerous enemy," for when they told him to come and steal, he was "ashamed not to be shameless."[41] This pattern of fearful shame-avoidance marked his adolescent days:

> What is more worthy of censure than vice? Yet I went deeper into vice to avoid being despised, and when there was no act by admitting to which I could rival my depraved companions, I used to pretend I had done things I had not done at all, so that my innocence should not lead my companions to scorn my lack of courage, and lest my chastity be taken as a mark of inferiority.[42]

Augustine's bluffing is a protective maneuver for a heart unsure that its worth will stand up to public scrutiny or win the social approval one desires. The trouble with this fearfully vainglorious strategy is that it is clearly counterproductive. If one desires to be truly affirmed and approved, then culling approval through exaggerated appearances for a touched-up and ultimately false version of oneself is a strategy doomed to fail. Only the mask shown is loved and "known." Further, as the older Augustine wisely recognizes, human audiences will never deliver anything but conditional approval and temporary attention.

Why does the tradition neglect fear and focus on pride in its discussion of the roots of vainglory? This is a notable lacuna. It is puzzling that Augustine's own confessions are not integrated into the conceptual architecture of vainglory, when he is such an articulate spokesperson for this vice. Is the lacuna a reflection of masculine or monastic experience, such that it is acceptable to struggle with a desire to be superior, but not with feelings of inferiority? Or is it caused by a systematic desire for simplicity, so that all vice is grounded in a single original sin? In defense of the tradition, one might contend that fear itself is ultimately rooted in a pridefully independent notion of the self – one that does not rely on God's love and goodness for a secure foundation of one's worth, and so fearfully

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[41] Augustine, *Confessions*, II, c. ix (Chadwick, 34).
[42] Augustine, *Confessions*, II, c. iii (Chadwick, 27–28).

compensates to fill the gap. I am not concerned here to make the case that fear is as deeply rooted a motive as pride, only to note that when giving a psychological profile of the vice, taking note of fearful motivations is useful for understanding common forms of vainglory and its offspring vices, and the ways they manifest themselves in human lives millennia ago as well as today.

A virtuous circle

While the *QDM* offers us a catalog of vices, the *ST* mentions vices only secondarily, in connection with their opposing virtues. In *ST*, Aquinas opposes vainglory to the virtue of magnanimity, which, one might argue, is a striking and perhaps even jarring Aristotelian insertion into his Christian moral theology.[43] His point in adapting this virtue from its original Greek context, however, is arguably to note that outstanding excellence is worth pursuing, and the glory attaching to it is not something to be entirely shunned, but rather, managed well. This move puts him more in line with Augustine, whose vocation called him to regular preaching in front of a congregation and a highly visible position in the church, than with Cassian, who recommends that one shun vainglory by doing nothing outside of common practice of the rest of the monastic community so as not to call attention to oneself as singular or standing out in any way.[44] Aquinas thinks that glory – even glory for remarkable gifts and magnanimous achievements – can be used to serve others. In fact, one might consider this a sort of test case: Can even great glory be handled with virtue? What might this look like?

   As bishop of Hippo, Augustine is still engaged in rhetoric in front of an audience, now in the service of God, giving sermons to his congregation. In this role, he imagines a way to celebrate goodness well, but unlike Aquinas, he explicitly frames this task as a communal one. It requires virtue not only on the part of the one in the spotlight, but also of his or her audience. Moreover, it is no accident that his example is the church. As a preacher, Augustine's very public role is to give his congregation spiritual nourishment, not to nourish his own desire for praise with their applause,

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[43] *ST* II-II, q. 129.
[44] Cassian, *Institutes*, XII, xix. Benedict, likewise, in the eighth step of humility in chapter seven of his *Rule*, requires that a "monk do nothing but except is commended by the common Rule of the monastery and the example of the elders," in *St. Benedict's Rule for Monasteries*, trans. Cuthbert Butler (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1948), 27.

and his words are not his own – they are God's words from Scripture. His struggle, however, is painfully familiar:

> What am I to do today but present you with the danger I am in, so that you may be my joy? Now my danger is this: that I pay attention to how you praise me, and take no notice of the sort of lives you lead. But [God] knows. And it is under his gaze that I speak, under whose gaze I am not so much delighted by praise and popularity, as [I am] vexed and troubled about what sort of lives are led by those who praise me. As for being praised by those who lead bad lives, I don't want it, I shudder at it, detest it, it causes me pain, not pleasure. While as for being praised by those who lead good lives, if I say I don't want it, I will be lying; if I say I do want it, I'm afraid I may be more bent on vanity than on the solid good. So what am I to say? I don't completely want it, and I don't completely not want it. I don't completely want it, in case I should be imperiled by human praise; I don't completely not want it, in case it should mean that those to whom I preach are ungrateful […]. So then, brothers and sisters, lighten my burden, lighten it, please, and carry it with me; lead good lives.[45]

The solution to vainglory he offers his congregation is two-fold. First, in a point we have already seen Aquinas echo in *QDM* a. 9, a. 1, ad 3, since all goodness is from God, one should acknowledge the ultimate source of all glory that comes to oneself. So Augustine describes himself in the same sermon as a "waiter" serving bread from "the storehouses of the Lord," who is himself fed on the same bread he serves to others. If one thinks of one's own goodness as a gift from God, one is less likely to vaingloriously claim any praise received for it all for oneself. Moreover, if one thinks of the goodness one has (in this case, pastoral words for one's congregation) as a gift given in order to be shared, any praise for that gift from those who share it is also rightly passed on to the original author.

Second, Augustine hints at a virtuous circle, made possible by creating a culture of good glory-giving and glory-receiving. In doing so, he gives us a picture of how Aquinas's three proper purposes for glory might be linked in a cycle of celebration and encouragement that brings God glory. His recommendation that his congregation "lighten his burden" by carrying it with him shows the importance of the audience's good judgment and ability to give glory appropriately and for the right reasons.[46] If others praise one for things that are genuinely praiseworthy, rather than

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[45] Augustine, Sermon 339, 1–4, in *Sermons*, vol. III.9, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1994), 279–282, with minor alteration. Thanks to William Harmless, S. J., for calling this passage to my attention.

[46] Aquinas mentions the judgment of one's audience explicitly in *ST* II-II, q. 132, a. 1.

for shallow or sensational or even shameful things, one can rightly appreciate their approval. If others acknowledge one's good achievements, and do so with proportionate attention, one learns to cultivate proportionate desire and is encouraged to persist in that goodness. (Overpraise can be as morally and motivationally undermining as under-acknowledgment. One thinks of entertainers and other public figures who struggle with the pressure of having to live up to their hype.) Having the cooperation of a good audience helps Augustine handle glory well. From his congregation's good lives he can see that he has shepherded them well; thus their praise is a genuine encouragement to him. Together, bishop and congregation reflect well on God, bringing God glory. All those inside such a community are thus mutually encouraged in their practices of virtue and able to delight in each other's gifts properly, so their glory-giving builds each other up. A community like this is also attractive to those outside it, and thus attracts the right kind of attention for God. Vainglory can trap one in a circle of vice, but that vicious circle is nothing but a distortion of an alternative *virtuous* circle – of goodness, affirmation, and praise – that is how things are meant to be.

Aquinas thinks that glory is a good thing, appropriately handled. Human beings are social and communicative beings, so the goal is not to cut oneself off from others' feedback altogether, but to value appropriately the attention and affirmation one does get. Such valuations are not merely a crutch for those who are not sufficiently internally motivated; rather, they portray a flourishing community that readily gives due recognition to goodness that is worth affirming and celebrates it appropriately. As Augustine notes, if a congregation whose good lives attest to his good pastoring gives him praise, this good word means more to him than the empty flattery of those for whom his sermons go in one ear and out the other. Thinking of glory as a good thing provides a challenge to imagine what a culture of well-lived and well-loved glory would look like.

Offspring vices

If vainglory is a capital or source vice, it, like the other capital vices, will bear its own distinctive fruits, usually known as "offspring" or "daughter" vices.[47] Most offspring vices are either *means* to the end of the capital

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[47] Aquinas likens the capital vice to a mother who gives birth within herself in *QDM*, q. 9, a. 3, c., but the designation "daughter" may simply be because the names of the vices (as well as the virtues) are feminine nouns in the Latin.

vice (i.e., characteristic strategies to get glory) or *effects* of seeking it excessively. Vainglory's offspring vices divide into two categories: its direct and indirect vices – direct, when through them one immediately seeks positive glory, and indirect, when through them one seeks not to lose face. The first two direct offspring vices of vainglory, boasting and hypocrisy, have already been mentioned. Bragging about one's own goodness is a way of calling attention to oneself, and hypocrisy wins the right sort of attention by concealing the true self and presenting a false appearance instead to garner social approval. Presumption of novelties, the third in the set of direct offspring vices, is the habit of always having the latest and greatest new gadget or bit of information because such novelties win you the fascinated attention of others. Presumption of novelties capitalizes on *curiositas*, the impulse to possess for oneself original information on the frontiers of human knowledge.[48] Both the internet and incessant technological innovation make this vainglorious strategy easier to use than ever, while advertising products as "new and improved" is a tactic that this medieval taxonomy articulated already centuries ago.

The indirect offspring vices, by contrast, are strategies deployed to ensure that one does not lose glory. Unlike boasting and presumption of novelties – habits of promoting or over-promoting one's goodness publicly – the indirect vices are defensive or negative "face-saving" measures. Aquinas arranges them (likely progressively) from interior to exterior habits: first, obstinacy in the mind, where one refuses to admit another's wisdom or counsel as better than one's own; second, discord in the will, where one refuses to agree with or submit to a superior; third, contention in words, where one quarrels openly with another, refusing to give way in an argument; and finally, disobedience in deeds, where one refuses to comply with a superior's command.[49] Those who cannot do glory-seeking boldly may thus defend their egos and their share of the limelight through resistance to those who can, whether by open criticism and defiance or subtle subterfuge.

The indirect offspring vices reflect monastic hierarchies of authority and the main ways vainglory manifested itself in that setting (e.g., flouting one's vows of obedience), but one might easily transpose them into,

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[48] Aquinas discusses this vice at *ST* II-II, q. 167 (and its opposing virtue, *studiositas*, at q. 166); he also mentions it in *QDM*, q. 8, a. 2, c., and q. 14, a. 3, ad 4. For a fuller discussion of this vice, see Paul J. Griffiths, *The Vice of Curiosity: An Essay on Intellectual Appetite* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: CMU Press, 2006) and *Intellectual Appetite: A Theological Grammar* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009).

[49] *QDM*, q. 9, a. 4; *ST* II-II q. 132, a. 5.

for example, an exchange between a teenager and parent or an employee and supervisor. Aquinas also implicitly links vainglory to pride here by assuming that to give way in such a context is to show oneself inferior to another; the vainglorious person's preoccupation in her display of self is also therefore a preoccupation with perceptions of her social status and rank. Anyone familiar with Benedict's twelve steps of humility will recognize the list of indirect offspring vices as symptomatic of pride.

If, however, someone were already more susceptible to vainglory's fearful forms, or someone were in a position of oppression, calling these traits *vices* might be morally problematic. Such a person might already be overly deferential to or dependent on others' authoritative approval in a way that is unhealthy but not something for which they should be morally blamed (especially for pride). With or without fearful vainglory, the disempowered might be more prone to use strategies of deceptiveness, concealment, manipulative modes of self-presentation, or underhanded attempts to claim attention or resist those in authority. Anyone familiar with analyses of social power and position will recognize these habits as the tactics of those without either the confidence or the power to assert themselves openly, even when such self-assertion would be just or a healthy sign of self-respect. As with any of the vices, therefore, one should be cautious in diagnosing moral disorder or offering remedial advice on the basis of an individual's behavioral symptoms alone. Interpreting the tradition on this point will require attention to context when Aquinas and Gregory's analysis of this vice's offspring is translated into social situations outside the monastery.

Remedial practices

The *QDM* is a set of questions about sin, and the analysis of vainglory Aquinas offers there is a valuable diagnostic tool, richly anchored in centuries of reflection and practice. Given the limits of his topic, however, he does not spend time addressing spiritual practices for resisting vainglory or the other vices. The tradition he is drawing on, from the desert fathers through Cassian and Benedict on forward, recommends two disciplines in particular – silence and solitude – to strengthen one against or help one recover from vainglory.[50] Both are designed to help one relinquish

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[50] These two practices are still a regular part of Dominican life; see *The Book of Constitutions and Ordinations of the Brothers of the Order of Preachers* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2012), 55, art. V, §40, §41.

unhealthy attachments to social approval and recognition from potential audiences. Take this example of desert practice from Abba Macarius (teacher of Evagrius, the first compiler of the vices):

> A brother came to see Abba Macarius the Egyptian and said to him, "Abba, give me a word, that I might be saved." So the old man said, "Go to the cemetery and abuse the dead." The brother went there, abused them and threw stones at them; then he returned and told the old man about it. The latter said to him, "Didn't they say anything to you?" He replied, "No." The old man said, "Go back tomorrow and praise them." So the brother went away and praised them, calling them, "Apostles, saints, and righteous men." He returned to the old man and said to him, "I have complimented them." And the old man said to him, "Did they not answer you?" The brother said no. The old man said to him, "You know how you insulted them and they did not reply, and how you praised them and they did not speak; so you too if you wish to be saved must do the same and become a dead man. Like the dead, take no account either of the scorn of men or their praises."[51]

Cassian, with a nod to prideful vainglory, commends behaving in ways that are in step with ordinary monastic practice to avoid calling attention to oneself in any way: monks should

> strive utterly to reject as the stuff of boastfulness whatever is not generally accepted and practiced as part of the way of life of the brothers [in one's monastic community], and we must also avoid those things that could set us apart from others and that would gain us praise from human beings, as if we were the only ones who could do them.[52]

Advice from these early fathers therefore covered both inner attitudes and outward behavior, since the goal was detachment from both vainglorious desires and occasions that might prompt them.

Silence and solitude are meant, respectively, to check one's use of words and to deprive one of an audience. Conversation can be a healthy, truthful, and even necessary mode of self-disclosure, of course, but the human tendency is to misuse language for self-aggrandizement, self-promotion, spin, and a host of other vainglorious maneuvers. The corrective way to wisdom and virtue, then, is through silence. Following the desert fathers, Benedict, in his *Rule*, assigns limits on speech in three of the twelve steps of humility in chapter 7, and commends the practice of silence in general in chapter 6. Richard Foster and others concerned with spiritual

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[51] *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, trans. Benedicta Ward, rev. ed. (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 132.
[52] Cassian, *Institutes*, XI, xix (Ramsey, 248).

formation note that words are often used to control others and their consumption of one's public image.[53] Silence is an exercise in which one practices putting a stop to speech both to heighten awareness of how liable human beings are to lapse into disordered communication and to disrupt those patterns before they become a vicious habit. The same practice often simultaneously enables one to pay better attention to others in a posture of intentional attentiveness and receptivity. In solitude, one chooses to step away from other people for whom one is tempted to perform or portray oneself in socially approved ways. Without an audience, one can stop playing roles, remove oneself from a world of constant assessment by others, and lay down the anxieties that come with pleasing or placating others on whose attention or approval one has built one's self-image. As the desert fathers knew well, what one often finds in solitude is a head noisy with imagined voices, full of fantasies about the reactions of imagined audiences. Recall Cassian's story of the young "preaching" monk. In time, those inner voices must also be silenced.

Those with fearful vainglory may equally need to wean themselves off overreliance on human opinion and approval, but this may require not so much silence or solitude but hearing truthful and reliable affirmation in an encouraging and safe environment. Robin Dillon has argued that self-respect is learned by experiencing others express respect for oneself, and the same principle may well apply here.[54] Like Aquinas's suggestion that affirmation of one's goodness may move one to persevere in it, one might need others' acknowledgment of one's goodness to recognize or appreciate it properly in oneself. Having a good and virtuous audience may thus be crucial to countering vainglory, at least in cases in which one is working from a serious deficit of good glory, for example, in cases of neglect, abuse, sexism, or racism. In fact, learning to regard one's own goodness as good in the right sort of way may well be a necessary step in moral education.

Humility, magnanimity, and celebrity

All the capital vices commit the same error, namely, trying to engineer one's own ultimate happiness (however one chooses to specify that) on

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[53] Richard J. Foster, *The Freedom of Simplicity: Finding Harmony in a Complex World* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 1973), 14, 68, 116. See also Henri J. M. Nouwen, who, in *The Way of the Heart* (New York: Ballantine, 1981), interprets the desert fathers' chief spiritual practices as solitude, silence, and prayer.

[54] Robin S. Dillon, "Toward a Feminist Conception of Self-Respect," *Hypatia* 7 (1992): 52–69, at 61.

one's own power, in imitation of the devil.[55] In vainglory, perhaps surprisingly, it is not glory-seeking itself that is a spiritual problem, but rather whether glory is sought in excessive ways or for oneself alone, without regard for either God or the spiritual benefit of anyone else in relation to God.

In addition to questioning whether pride and vainglory ought to be distinguished as members on the list of capital vices, one might raise an additional objection about the assumptions behind Aquinas's account of vainglory. If humility is a Christian virtue, how can one reconcile that disposition with a disposition to have the right sort of attachment to well-ordered glory? Wouldn't a humble life require no such attachment or even shunning all glory? For example, rather than have pilgrims find him in his desert cell, the story goes that Abba Moses would run away into a marsh to avoid the temptation their visits brought (*i.e.*, to think of himself as a holy sage). On one occasion, while trying to flee, he accidentally ran into the distinguished judge coming to visit him. The judge told him he was off to visit Abba Moses, and the wily father scornfully answered, "What do you want with him? He is a fool!" The judge returned to the city, where others revealed that the old man in rags he had spoken with was in fact the very man he sought. Realizing from their exchange that Abba Moses desired solitude, the judge came away "greatly edified."[56] As already noted, Benedict and Cassian likewise counsel blending into the ordinary customs of monastic life so as not to draw any attention to oneself in particular. Does avoiding vainglory require Abba Moses' extreme self-deprecation? Could this not be another subtle layer of vainglorious subterfuge itself?

Contrast the approach of these early Christian fathers with the publicity and marketing strategies of celebrities, public figures, professional athletes, and ministry leaders today who actively seek glory rather than shunning it. Their motives might include an all-too-human mixture: widening one's impact and spreading one's message, appearing polished and put together on one's book covers and webpage, and profiting through good marketing opportunities for self-presentation sifted by one's agent. The internet, including blogs, podcasts, and videos, gives those with a message – even a good one – unprecedented access to almost unlimited attention. It is one thing for celebrities in the entertainment industry to thoughtlessly and shamelessly seek and flaunt glory. It is quite another

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[55] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 3, c.   [56] *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, 140.

for respected public figures or those in public ministry (like Augustine the bishop). What would it mean for such people to have glory as a spiritual concern or to recognize its characteristic dangers? One might argue that vainglory is a concept needed now more than ever to articulate the pitfalls of the publicity that is often perceived as a neutral feature of public life, especially for those prone to underestimate its morally and spiritually corrosive power.

Aquinas takes a moderate position, as is his usual strategy, neither shunning all occasions in which one might stand out nor naively cultivating such opportunities without thought to their spiritual liabilities. By including the virtue of magnanimity in the *ST*, he seems to acknowledge that being outstanding in virtue or virtuous achievement is something that can be part of a flourishing human life, even in a fully explicit Christian framework. Leadership and public positions are therefore not to be shunned simply because they challenge one to handle the limelight well. On the other hand, Aquinas has to work to transform this virtue concerned with great acts and honors to make it compatible with humility and the primacy that distinctive virtue held in the tradition of Christian theological reflection and monastic practice he inherited. In the *ST*, as noted above, vainglory is the last of *three* vices opposed to magnanimity by excess; normally, Aquinas follows Aristotle in mentioning one of excess and one of deficiency.[57] In this trio of vices, one can imagine Aquinas teaching his readers about the process by which one might slide from genuine and outstanding excellence into empty glory. One who begins by appropriately valuing a certain excellence in themselves (paradigmatically, virtue), can shift into the vice of *praesumptio* by assuming that even greater excellence – beyond one's own ability – is fitting to oneself. Presumption is a kind of appetitive overreaching that accompanies a falsely inflated or conceited view of the self's power to do great things. Consider a filmmaker or professional athlete whose first production or physical achievements wins her wild success. This may incentivize a follow-up project (a sequel or series, for example) that she is not yet equipped or ready to write or produce well. Or in the athlete's case, it may tempt one to steroid use to break even more records. Further, if one stands frequently in a position of excellence, one can also become too eager to win the respect and deference of experts who find the greatness of one's achievements noteworthy (*ambitiosa*). Imagine the ever increasing speaking schedule of a professor or public figure, who finds each distinguished lecture or commencement speech an

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[57] See *ST* II-II, qq. 129–133.

irresistible invitation on which he thinks his reputation depends. Finally, one's pursuit of excellence can shift into an illicit pursuit of honor in the following way: since honor and glory are natural effects of great achievement, the greater one's excellence, the higher one's habitual expectations may become for receiving others' regard (expecting, for example, to have one's work cited, or featured in national magazines, or mentioned on popular talk shows). If the need for regard outgrows the regard received, one might become less and less discriminating about the audience from whom one seeks it and more desperate for the regard than the excellence itself. Lastly, one might become so addicted to attention that one is increasingly motivated to attempt (or fake) great things merely in order to win the widest possible applause (*inanis gloria*). So the use of social media easily degenerates into self-made publicity, even self-made celebrity, especially if one posts something novel or controversial, anticipating that it will prompt reactions. Actual expertise is not often required. In an age of spectacle, it is easy to yearn for a space in the spotlight.

At the same time, magnanimity's opposing vice of deficiency, pusillanimity, warns of the opposite problem – thinking too little of one's goodness, and so failing to put it to use or make it manifest in ways that would benefit oneself or others. According to the tradition, burying one's talents neglects to give due glory to God by failing to use, display, and share his gifts. So one can fail in glory-seeking not simply by excess; there are occasions when one's goodness is *appropriately* shown and made known.

It is unsurprising that Aquinas's modification of the controversial Aristotelian virtue of magnanimity is shaped by Augustinian insights about good glory and ways to handle it well. As Augustine would have it, the gifts of goodness one is given are rightly shared and rightly celebrated, and the way this benefits all reflects well on God himself, who is the source of goodness and the one ultimately glorified by its rightful manifestation. Aquinas shows himself a subtle innovator and adept appropriator of the tradition on this point and many others, but his genius is to articulate the ideas he inherits in ways that can quicken moral conversations about this vice even today.

The goodness and evil of objects and ends

Thomas M. Osborne, Jr.

Thomas Aquinas's discussion of the relationship between an act's object and end can be confusing, especially if the *ST* I-II, qq. 18–20 are read in isolation from the sometimes better developed discussions in his contemporaneous or earlier *QDM*, q. 2, especially aa. 2–4. In the *ST* I-II, q. 18, two particular difficulties stand out.

The first difficulty is that Aquinas makes apparently contradictory statements about whether moral goodness principally comes from the object or from the end. In *ST* I-II, q. 18, a. 2, Aquinas identifies only the object when he writes, "just as the first goodness of a natural thing comes from the form, which specifies it, so the first goodness of a moral act comes from the suitable object."[1] This species from the object accounts for the first moral goodness. This statement might seem surprising since earlier in the same part of this work he states that an act is specified by its end.[2] Moreover, in a. 4, Aquinas seems to state that moral goodness principally comes from the end when he writes, "But just as the being of a thing depends on the agent and the form, thus the goodness of a thing depends on its end."[3]

The second difficulty is that in a. 6, Aquinas states that the exterior act is both an object and an end of the interior act. How can it be both, if the object and the end are really distinct? Moreover, if the exterior act is both the end and the object of the interior act, and either the object or the end is the principal source of moral goodness, would it not follow that the moral goodness of the interior act comes from the exterior act? In the previous question (q. 17), Aquinas identifies the exterior act as an act that is commanded by the will, and therefore itself not necessarily an act of

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[1] *ST* I-II, q. 18, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina*, VI: 128): "sicut prima bonitas rei naturalis attenditur ex sua forma, quae dat speciem ei, ita et prima bonitas actus moralis attenditur ex obiecto convenienti."

[2] *ST* I-II, q. 1, a. 3.

[3] *ST* I-II, q. 18, a. 4, c. (*Editio Leonina*, VI: 130): "Sicut autem esse rei dependet ab agente et forma, ita bonitas rei dependet a fine."

the will. Is the interior act of the will then made good by the acts of other human powers? It might seem at first glance that moral goodness should depend completely on the will.

Santiago Ramirez thinks that at least part of the second difficulty involves a development in Aquinas's understanding of moral goodness. According to Ramirez, Aquinas in his later writings is the first to state explicitly that the difference between good and bad acts is an essential and not an accidental division of the whole human act, including the exterior act.[4] In his earlier *Commentary on the Sentences* Aquinas merely repeats the views of his contemporaries that it is accidental. Aquinas develops a new account of the exterior act as essentially moral at the same time as he shifts his emphasis from an act's end to its conformity to reason or a rule. Nevertheless, Ramirez recognizes that in other later works Aquinas reiterates the connection between goodness and malice and the end.[5] He thinks it hard to reconcile these statements. According to Ramirez, the fully developed and consistent position is given only in the *QDM*.

My argument will be that although there is indeed development in Aquinas's thought, the *QDM* and the *ST* give consistent accounts. To understand the morality of the exterior act as an object and as an end, it is important to attend to a teaching that Aquinas develops in the *QDM*, which is that the exterior act is essentially good and bad insofar as it is the substratum of the deformity which makes the act sinful. This recognition allows him to explain more clearly how the interior and exterior acts are parts of one overall act. The interior act is formal, whereas the exterior act is material. The fact that the interior act causes the exterior does not mean that the acts are two distinct things. Aquinas carefully distinguishes between the exterior act as apprehended and willed previously to its execution, and the exterior act as the term of the execution. Consequently, he can consistently hold that the exterior act is not only the effect of the interior act, but is also the interior act's object. Insofar as it is can be apprehended as good or bad, the exterior act has its own suitability and matter. As such an object, this same exterior act is also an end of willing.

[4] Santiago Ramirez, *De actibus humanis: In I-II 'Summa Theologiae' Divi Thomae Expositio (QQ. VI–XXI)*, Edicion de las Obras Completas de Santiago Ramirez, vol. 4, ed. Victorino Rodriguez (Madrid: Instituto de Filosofia "Luis Vives," 1972), 527–542. See also Odon Lottin, *Psychologie et morale aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles*, 6 vols. (Louvain: Abbaye du Mont César / Gembloux: Ducolot, 1942–1960), II: 460–465. For a discussion of this division, see Joseph Pilsner, *The Specification of Human Actions in St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 61–69.

[5] Ramirez, *De actibus humanis*, 535. He mentions *ST* I, q. 48, a. 1, ad 2 and 3; *QDVCom*, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3. Ramirez seems to reflect the older view that the *QDM* is earlier than the *Prima secundae* of the *ST*, which is no longer the common position.

These distinctions allow him to hold consistently in both the *QDM* and in the *ST* that the exterior act has its own matter and object while at the same time it specifies and is the end of the interior act. It is important to address the difficulty concerning the relationship between the exterior and interior acts before considering more problematic difficulties about the relationship between the will, the object, and the end.

My argument has three parts. First, Aquinas's early *Commentary on Sentences*, considered in context, shows how Aquinas needs an account of how the exterior act is essentially moral even though he has not yet developed such an account. Some puzzling statements in this early text may be a result of the confused vocabulary that Aquinas inherited from his predecessors. Second, a study of the *QDM*, q. 2, aa. 2–3 will show the precise meaning of Aquinas's claims that the exterior act is essentially moral, and that it is both an end and object of the interior act. The exterior act is apprehended as good or bad insofar as it conforms or fails to conform to reason. This later discussion is more precise and consistent than that of the *Commentary on the Sentences*. Third, it will be shown that these claims as developed in the *QDM* show how to reconcile the apparently conflicting statements of the *ST* on the two central problems of how the exterior act can be both end and object, and why in different contexts Aquinas gives different priorities to the goodness that comes from the object and that which comes from the end.

Aquinas's early account in the *Commentary on the Sentences*

In order to understand Aquinas's relationship to his contemporaries and predecessors, it is important to recognize that they share an inherited vocabulary which can be confusing and may in fact hide conceptual difficulties. Everyone in his period distinguishes between objects, circumstances, due matter, matter *circa quam*, and ends, as well as the distinction between the interior act, the exterior act, and the act according to its natural species. But the meanings of some terms are not fixed, and there is disagreement about the relationship between generic badness, the object, the circumstances, and the end. In his early *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas gives the outline to his solution of how to coordinate these different terms.[6] Moreover, although he explicitly denies the thesis that the

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[6] For the different influences on Aquinas and his terminology, see Thomas M. Osborne, Jr., *Human Action in Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 149–166.

exterior act is essentially good or bad, he lays out some of the groundwork for this thesis. It is helpful to compare his views on this issue with those of Bonaventure (1217–1274) and Albert the Great (c. 1200–1280) in order to show that Aquinas's earlier thesis that the exterior act is only accidentally moral is not so much a developed element of his thought as a restatement of the views given by at least some of his predecessors and contemporaries.

The discussion occurs in the context of a dispute that began in the previous century. Peter Abelard (1079–1142) had argued that the act itself is good or bad only on account of the agent's intention.[7] In his *Sentences*, Peter Lombard (c. 1095–1160) replied that certain acts are generically (*in genere*) good or bad apart from the agent's intention. Generically good acts can become bad if the agent has a bad end, but generically bad acts can never become good even if the agent has a good end. Lombard's work eventually became the standard textbook in theology, and his view on the goodness and badness of acts was in some form accepted by later theologians.

Bonaventure notes that two exterior acts can have the same generic and circumstantial goodness and yet differ with respect to merit. One might be performed by someone who has the virtue of charity and the other by someone who lacks it.[8] When considering whether goodness and badness can be essential to an act, Bonaventure distinguishes between 1) the act in itself, 2) the act insofar as it is this act (*haec actio*), and the 3) act insofar as it is such an act (*talis actio*).[9] With respect to 1) the act in itself, an act's goodness or badness can be a separable and common accident in the way that whiteness is a common and separable accident of a human being or a rock. For instance, the goodness of preaching can be separated from the act of preaching. If someone preaches out of vainglory, then the act is bad. With respect to 2) the act insofar as it is this act, badness is an inseparable and proper accident, in the way that risibility is an inseparable and proper accident of a man. With respect to 3), the act insofar as it is such an act, an act's badness is essential even though it is not an essential difference. The badness does not designate the act's essence. Such badness is essential

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[7] For this debate and the later influence of Lombard, see Ramirez, *De actibus humanis*, 527–530; Lottin, *Pyschologie et Morale*, II: 421–465; Tobias Hoffmann, "Moral Action as Human Action: End and Object in Aquinas in Comparison with Abelard, Lombard, Albert, and Duns Scotus," *The Thomist* 67 (2003): 73–94, at 75–82; Stanley B. Cunningham, *Reclaiming Moral Agency: The Moral Philosophy of Albert the Great* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 57–63.

[8] Bonaventure, *In Sent* II, d. 41, a. 1, q. 1, c., in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2 (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1885), 937–938.

[9] Bonaventure, *In Sent* II, d. 41, a. 1, q. 2, c., (*Opera omnia*, vol. 2, 940–941).

only in the same way as "whiteness" is essential to a white man insofar as he is white.

Aquinas's teacher Albert the Great addresses the distinction between generic goodness and badness and that goodness and badness that comes from circumstances.[10] According to Albert, an act has generic goodness when it is by nature proportionate to the matter *circa quam*.[11] What is this kind of matter? Albert gives the standard examples of feeding the hungry and teaching the ignorant. The matter *circa quam* in the first case is the hungry man and in the second case is the ignorant man. The acts of feeding and teaching in these cases are generically good because they are proportionate to the matter. It is not in the same way good to feed those who are ignorant but full, or to teach those who are knowledgeable but hungry.

Sometimes acts might lack generic goodness and yet become good through the addition of circumstances. According to Albert, circumstances are necessary for these acts to be proportionate to their due matter.[12] For example, killing and copulating are prone to evil. They are good only when there are circumstances that make them good. The circumstance "one's own" makes a woman appropriate matter for copulation, and certain persons are the appropriate matter for killing. The circumstances determine such acts to a particular species, such as conjugal chastity or justice. Some acts are morally good or bad even apart from their circumstances. Others are good or bad because they are determined by circumstances to a good or bad species.

Albert connects the badness of some acts with their intrinsic ends. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle had noted that certain acts are always bad, such as adultery, theft, and murder.[13] The badness is connected with the way in which they are named. Albert distinguishes between the end of the act and that of the agent. Adultery is bad even if the agent performs it for a good end, such as converting a heretic. The proximate end is in some way formal. Albert writes, "The name is imposed by the form, and the form in morals is from the end."[14] It is significant that these acts that are

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[10] Cunningham, *Reclaiming Moral Agency*, 115–144; Kevin L. Flannery, "The Multifarious Moral Object of Thomas Aquinas," *The Thomist* 67 (2003): 95–118, at 102–106.

[11] Albert, *De bono*, tr. 1, a. 4, sol. and ad 8, in *Opera omnia*, ed. Bernhard Geyer and Wilhelm Kübel (Münster: Aschendorff, 1951), XXVIII: 29–30; *In Sent* II, d. 36, K, a. 6, ad 4, in *Opera omnia*, ed. Auguste Borgnet, 38 vols. (Paris: Vivès, 1890–1899), XXVII: 593; *De natura boni*, tr. 2, p. 1, c. 1, in *Opera omnia*, ed. Geyer and Kübel, XXV: 8–9.

[12] Albert, *De Bono*, tr. 1, q. 2, a. 4, ad 7 (*Opera omnia*, ed. Geyer and Kübel, XXVIII: 30). Cf. *In Sent* II, d. 36, K, a. 6, sol. (*Opera omnia*, ed. Borgnet, XXVIII: 33). For Aquinas's understanding of due matter, see Pilsner, *The Specification of Human Actions*, 149–153.

[13] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, II, 1107a10–12. Albert discusses this text in *De bono*, tr. 1, q. 2, a. 6, arg. 6 and ad 6 (*Opera omnia*, ed. Geyer and Kübel, XXVIII: 32, 33).

[14] Albert, *De bono*, tr. 1, q. 2, a. 6, ad 6, (*Opera omnia*, ed. Geyer and Kübel, XXVIII: 33): "Nomen enim imponitur a forma, forma autem in moribus est a fine."

generically bad are inseparably connected to a bad end, namely the end of the act itself. In his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Albert states that goodness and badness are inseparable accidents of some acts.[15] He distinguishes the goodness of the end from this inseparable goodness or badness that can come from the object.[16] According to Albert, the interior act strictly speaking has no circumstances. He writes, "for circumstances are properly about exterior acts."[17]

In his own *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas resembles Albert in his distinction between generic moral goodness and badness and that goodness and badness which come from circumstances.[18] The generic goodness or badness comes from the object, but it is further determined by the end. The act of feeding the hungry has generic goodness. An act of feeding the hungry for God's sake has additional goodness. The latter act presupposes the former, but the former can exist without the latter. Aquinas holds that even though a generically good act such as feeding the hungry can be made bad by the end, the generic goodness in some way remains.

Unlike Albert, Aquinas clearly identifies the object with the matter *circa quam* and the proximate end.[19] With respect to the matter *circa quam*, Aquinas writes, "it is the same as the end, since the end is the object of the act."[20] If the object and the end are the same, then how is it possible to distinguish between feeding the hungry, which is generically good by its object, and feeding the hungry for God's sake, which has an additional goodness on account of its end? Aquinas explains, "some act has a twofold end, namely the proximate end, which is its object, and the remote, which the agent intends; and therefore, since the good from the end is distinguished from the generically good, it [the good from the end] is understood to be the remote end that the agent intends."[21] Generic goodness

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[15] Albert, *In Sent* II, d. 40, A, a. 1, sol. (*Opera omnia*, ed. Borgnet, XXVII: 625).

[16] Albert, *In Sent* II, d. 40, A, a. 1, ad 2 (*Opera omnia*, ed. Borgnet, XXVII: 625).

[17] Albert, *In Sent* II, d. 40, A, a. 1, ad 3 (*Opera omnia*, ed. Borgnet, XXVII: 625): "circumstantiae enim proprie sunt circa actus exteriores."

[18] Aquinas, *In Sent* II, d. 36, q. 1, a. 5. For proximate and remote ends, see Pilsner, *The Specification of Human Actions*, 217–238; Steven J. Jensen, *Good and Evil Actions: A Journey through Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 46–52. For *materia circa quam*, see Pilsner, *The Specification of Human Actions*, 144–149; Jensen, *Good and Evil Actions*, 116–121. Note that the generic goodness of this passage corresponds to what Aquinas calls specific goodness in *ST* I-II, q. 18, a. 2.

[19] Aquinas, *In Sent* II, d. 36, q. 1, a. 5, ad 4–5.

[20] Aquinas, *In Sent* II, d. 36, q. 1, a. 5, ad 4 (ed. Mandonnet/Moos, II: 936): "est idem cum fine, quia objectum finis actus est."

[21] Aquinas, *In Sent* II, d. 36, q. 1, a. 5, ad 5 (ed. Mandonnet/Moos, II: 936): "actus aliquis habet duplicem finem: scilicet proximum finem, qui est objectum ejus et remotum, quem agens intendit;

comes from the proximate end, which is the same as the matter and the object. The goodness from the end comes for the remote end, which is the same as the circumstance of the end that is willed by the agent. The man to be fed is not only the appropriate object and due matter, but also the proximate end of the agent who chooses to feed him. Pleasing or glorifying God is an additional remote end that such an agent might have.

An immediately noticeable problem is that the matter and even the object can be a thing itself but sometimes it seems to be the thing itself under a formal aspect. For example, is the man who needs to be fed himself the object of the act? Is he the matter? In what sense is he the end? Two different acts, namely feeding and teaching, might seem to have the same man as their matter, and yet they have distinct objects and proximate ends. This ambiguity is present in some way throughout Aquinas's writings, but it is helpful at this point to consider his position that the end is formal and not material. He writes, "the form of the will is the end and the good, which is its object and what is willed [*volitum*]; and therefore it is necessary that in acts of the will is found specific differences according to the formality [*ratio*] of the end."[22] The formal character of an action comes from the proximate end insofar as it is grasped as good and willed as an object. The matter of feeding a hungry man is in some sense the man, but it is more completely the hungry man who should be fed. The man is willed under a certain formality.

In this early work, Aquinas thinks that only the interior act of the will per se belongs to the genus of morals and is essentially specified by the end and object.[23] The exterior act, since it is commanded by the will, is divided into good and evil only derivatively (*reductive*) and *per accidens*. This early view resembles what we find in Albert and Aquinas's contemporaries. Aquinas gives an example to illustrate the different kinds of goodness and badness.[24] Copulating as such is commanded by the will and not a moral act. Aquinas does not even suggest in this context Albert's view that it is somehow prone to evil. Rendering the marriage debt and fornication both have the same natural species even though they are entirely different

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et ideo cum bonum ex fine distinguitur contra bonum ex genere, intelligitur de fine remoto quem agens intendit."

[22] Aquinas, *In Sent* II, d. 40, q. 1, a. 1, sol. (ed. Mandonnet/Moos, II: 1011): "Forma autem voluntatis est finis et bonum, quod est ejus objectum et volitum; et ideo oportet quod in actibus voluntatis inveniatur differentia specifica secundum rationem finis." For Aquinas's understanding of "*ratio*" in this context, see Pilsner, *The Specification of Human Actions*, 102–133; Jensen, *Good and Evil Actions*, 121–125.

[23] Aquinas, *In Sent* II, d. 40, q. 1, a. 1, sol. For the genera of nature and morals, see Jensen, *Good and Evil Actions*, 34–41.

[24] Aquinas, *In Sent* II, d. 40, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4.

moral acts. These two acts of copulation have the same natural effect inso-
far as they belong to the same natural species. An infant might be the
result of either act. The exterior or commanded acts of copulating belong
to the genus of morals only because they are commanded by the respect-
ive acts of the will, namely the interior acts of rendering the marriage debt
and fornication. Insofar as they are moral, these acts have different effects.
By rendering the marriage debt one merits in some way, and by fornicat-
ing one deserves punishment. Both commanded acts belong to the species
of morals only because they are caused by interior acts of the will.

In this early work, the nature of the exterior act is unclear. From pas-
sages such as the one discussed above, it might be thought that the exter-
ior act is the same as the act considered according to its natural species.
In other distinctions that belong to this same early text, Aquinas clearly
differentiates between the exterior act and the natural species. An act that
is one in the genus of nature, such as walking, can have multiple moral
acts, each of which has its own exterior and interior act. For instance,
someone might walk to church first with a good intention then with a bad
intention. The same act in the species of nature will be the substratum for
two distinct moral acts, each with its own interior and exterior act.[25] The
number of moral acts is not determined by the act's natural species, but by
the number of acts of the will.[26]

Even though Aquinas in these early texts clearly describes the exterior
act as always belonging to the genus of morals, he also holds that it has
moral worth only insofar as it is caused by or reveals the interior act. For
instance, both the interior and exterior acts can be sins insofar as sin is not
only materially a privation but also formally a disordered conversion to a
good.[27] The act is culpable because the deformed act has been willed. The
exterior act is culpable to the extent that it has been essentially ordered by
the interior act. It is important that for the exterior act to be culpable, the
causal chain must be ordered. The commanded movements of the hand
towards the wallet, for instance, are not by chance, but they are ordered
by the interior act of giving alms.

There is a mutual causal relationship between the exterior and inter-
ior acts. The exercise of the exterior comes from the interior act, and the
interior act has the exterior act as its object. Aquinas writes:

> And since the exterior act is compared to the will as an object, thence it
> is that the interior act has its goodness of the will from the exterior, not

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[25] Aquinas, *In Sent* II, d. 40, q. 1, a. 4, sol. and ad 2.   [26] Aquinas, *In Sent* II, d. 42, q. 1, a. 1.
[27] Aquinas, *In Sent* II, d. 35, q. 1, a. 4, sol. and ad 3–5.

indeed from the fact that it is exercised, but according to that which is
intended and willed, because, according to that which is exercised, it fol-
lows the act of the will. But a certain formality [*ratio*] of goodness consists
in the act of the interior will according to itself, according to which the will
is the mistress of its acts, according to which goodness the act has the for-
mality of merit or praiseworthiness, and this goodness from the interior act
proceeds into the exterior.[28]

Aquinas's focus on the text is on the goodness that comes from the inter-
ior act. He thinks that the exterior act contributes to an act's goodness or
malice first as intended or willed, and then by adding accidental merit.
The will is complete only when there is execution. Nevertheless, the exe-
cuted act is good or bad because of its interior act.

   This early discussion in the *Commentary on the Sentences* contains the
seeds of Aquinas's later teaching that the exterior act is essentially moral,
even though in this work Aquinas explicitly states that it is moral only
accidentally and as led back to the genus of morals through the interior
act. Aquinas greatly clarifies the contemporary terminology. He identifies
generic goodness or malice with that goodness that comes from the object,
which is the same as the proximate end. The object and the proximate end
are in some way identical to the matter *circa quam* as well, although the
former are formal with respect to the will's interior act.

Aquinas's developed view in the *QDM*

Aquinas's position that the exterior act is essentially moral is developed
and defended most clearly in two articles of the *QDM*, q. 2, namely: a. 2,
which is on whether sin is only an act of the will, and a. 3, which consid-
ers whether sin is principally an act of the will. In a. 2, he explains how
the deformity of sin is present in both the exterior and the exterior act.
In a. 3, he uses the distinction between the exterior act as apprehended
and executed in order to argue that although there is a way in which sin
is principally in the will, there is another way in which it is principally in
the exterior act.

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[28] Aquinas, *In Sent* II, d. 40, q. 1, a. 3, sol. (ed. Mandonnet/Moos, II: 1017): "Et quia actus exterior
comparatur ad voluntatem sicut objectum, inde est quod hanc bonitatem voluntatis actus inter-
ior ab exteriori habet, non quidem ex eo secundum quod est exercitus, sed secundum quod est
intentus et volitus: quia, secundum quod est exercitus, sequitur actus voluntatis. Sed quaedam
ratio bonitatis consistit in actu interioris voluntatis secundum se, secundum quod voluntas est
domina suorum actum, secundum quam bonitatem actus habet rationem meriti vel laudabilis: et
haec bonitas ex actu interiori in exteriorem procedit."

In order to address the issue, Aquinas recalls the distinction between the bad (*malum*), sin (*peccatum*), and fault (*culpa*).[29] The notion of the bad is most common, since it involves the privation of form or due measure or order in any subject or act. But sin is only in an act. It can be present in nature, art, or in morals. The words in English and even in Latin do not adequately convey Aquinas's distinctions, so it is helpful to consider an example. A crooked leg is not a sin, but it is bad. By contrast, the limping caused by the crooked leg is a sin, but it is not a fault. A fault occurs only when the sin is voluntary. This distinction seems strange to us, and Aquinas notes that it also does not follow the usage of theologians, who use "sin" and "fault" interchangeably. Aquinas uses this distinction because it is important to recognize that sin is not merely privation, but an act.[30] Sin is therefore a much narrower term than "the bad." Nevertheless, although every bad act or sin is in some way disordered, some bad acts are not faults. Consequently, this threefold division expresses important differences, even it does not completely track contemporary or even medieval usage.

An act is a fault insofar as the disordered act is voluntary. Consequently, it is important to consider both a sin's voluntary character and its deformity. This last consideration involves not only the disorder itself, but the act which is the substratum of the disorder. Aquinas writes:

> But the deformity of the act is through this fact that it disagrees with the due rule of reason or of God's law. Which deformity indeed is found not only in the interior act, but the exterior; but still this fact that the deformed act is imputed to a man as guilt, is from the will. And thus it is apparent that if we will to consider all that is in a sin, the sin consists not only in the privation nor solely in the interior act, but even in the exterior act.[31]

The basic argument is clear. Sin is not only a privation but it is also a disordered or deformed act. This disorder can be found in the exterior act. Consequently, the exterior act itself is sinful. Here Aquinas is considering the exterior act insofar as it is executed but not as understood.

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[29] Aquinas, *QDM*, q. 2, c. (Editio Leonina, XXIII: 33, ll. 123–142).

[30] Gregory M. Reichberg, "Beyond Privation: Moral Evil in Aquinas's *De Malo*," *The Review of Metaphysics* 55 (2002): 751–784. For references to earlier disputes, see Dermot Mulligan, "Moral Evil: St. Thomas and the Thomists," *Philosophical Studies* (Ireland) 9 (1959): 3–26.

[31] Aquinas, *QDM*, q. 2, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 33, ll. 151–160): "Deformitas autem actus est per hoc quod discordat a debita regula rationis uel legis Dei. Que quidem deformitas inuenitur non solum in actu interiori, set exteriori; set tamen hoc ipsum quod actus exterior deformis imputetur homini ad culpam, est a uoluntate. Et sic patet quod si totum id quod est in peccato considerare uolumus, peccatum non solum consistit in priuatione neque solum in actu interiori, set etiam in actu exteriori."

The reference to the interior act agrees with his earlier statements about the importance of the will and the interior act. But Aquinas has developed a new teaching on the identity of the interior and exterior act which to some extent depends on his earlier focus on the way in which the exterior act is caused by the interior. We have seen how in the *Commentary on the Sentences* Aquinas states that sinfulness of the interior act comes from the will. Similarly, in this article he states that the exterior act is culpable because it has been willed. Moreover, in the replies to the objections he explains that the sin of the exterior act belongs to the will precisely because it is caused or commanded by the will. The new feature is that this causation is related to the way in which the interior act is the form or nature [*ratio*] of the exterior act. This description of the relationship between the two acts as one of form and matter allows Aquinas to argue that the exterior act itself can be essentially bad.

In obj. 5 of a. 2, Aquinas considers the objection that since the exterior act is separable from the interior act, it is only accidentally sinful. The assumption is that if a property or feature is separable then it is an accident. This argument resembles some of what we have seen in Bonaventure. In his reply to this objection Aquinas points out that sometimes two things might be separable not because they are accidentally related, but because one is materially related to another.[32] For instance, light can exist without color even though color cannot exist without light. The light is formal and the color is material. The separability of light from color does not entail that the light is only accidentally related to color. There are similar examples in willing and in knowing. An end can be willed even if there is no means to attain that end. Principles can be known even if the conclusion is unknown. The end is the formality by which the means are willed, and the principles are the formality by which the conclusion is known. Consequently, the end is willed along with the means in one act of willing, and the conclusion is known along with the principles in one act of knowing. According to Aquinas, the relationship between the interior and exterior acts is similar. Since the interior act is the formality by which the exterior act is culpable, the exterior act is materially related to the interior act. Consequently, the exterior act's malice is not merely accidental.

Aquinas argues that the interior and exterior acts are one sin, related to each other as form is related to matter. How is this position compatible with the position that the exterior act is culpable insofar as it is caused by the interior act? In obj. 11, Aquinas considers precisely this objection, which is that the interior and exterior act cannot be the same because the

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[32] Aquinas, *QDM*, q. 2, a. 2, ad 5.

interior act causes the exterior acts. Aquinas replies by again stating that the interior is related to the exterior act as matter and form, but he more clearly expounds their unity.[33] He refers to how color and light are one visible thing, although light makes color visible. Similarly, the interior act and the exterior act are one thing, even though the interior act in some way causes the exterior act. To illustrate his point, Aquinas mentions that an act of a superior virtue can cause that of an inferior virtue, and in such a case the superior act is formal with respect to the inferior act. We can think of the person who bravely faces death out of justice. The act on its own is one of courage, but it takes on a new formal character from the fact that it is commanded by justice. This act of courage essentially differs from that of someone who bravely faces martyrdom for the sake of faith, which is supernatural. The goodness of facing death for justice cannot be separated from justice any more than the goodness of dying for the faith can be separated from the virtue of faith.

In the next article, namely, q. 2, a. 3, Aquinas considers whether sin is principally in the will's act. As he had done in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas again distinguishes between the exterior act's apprehension and execution. But he uses the distinction between apprehension and execution in support of his view that the exterior act is intrinsically moral. It allows him to emphasize that the exterior act is related to the interior not only as an effect, but also as an end and as an object.

The importance of the exterior act's object is addressed more clearly in other sections of the *QDM*, and especially in q. 2, a. 4, which is on indifferent acts.[34] According to Aquinas, some acts are generically good, some are generically evil, and some are generically indifferent. These indifferent acts are always good or bad when performed, since they are done for a good or bad end, and may be made bad by other circumstances. Aquinas connects generic goodness and badness with the reasonableness of the exterior act's object. According to Aquinas, an act

> receives its species from the object according to which it is compared to reason. And therefore it is said commonly that certain acts are generically good or bad, and that a generically good act is an act falling on appropriate matter, such as feeding the hungry, but a generically bad act is that which falls on inappropriate matter, such as taking someone else's things: for the matter of an act is called its object.[35]

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[33] Aquinas, *QDM*, q. 2, a. 2, ad 11.
[34] See also Aquinas, *In Sent* II, d. 40, q. 1, a. 5; *ST* I-II, q. 18, a. 8 and 9.
[35] Aquinas, *QDM*, q. 2, a. 4, ad 5 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 40–41, ll. 278–286): "recipit speciem ab obiecto secundum quod comparatur ad rationem. Et ideo dicitur communiter quod actus quidem

The examples are the same as those given by Aquinas's contemporaries and predecessors, including Bonaventure and Albert the Great. In another discussion of an act's matter, Aquinas, like Albert, mentions Aristotle's three examples of homicide, adultery, and theft.[36] According to Aquinas, these acts are generically evil and distinguished from each other by their matter. Adultery and fornication differ on account of their matter. The matter of adultery is a married woman, and the matter of fornication is an unmarried woman. Sometimes the matter of one act can belong to two different species. For instance, theft has another's goods as its matter, but it becomes also an act of sacrilege if it is done in a sacred place. The location brings a further dissonance from reason.

This connection to reason explains how the exterior act's goodness or malice is related to that of the interior act. We have seen that the exterior act is specified by its object which is the matter *circa quam*, compared to reason. The interior act has this exterior act as its object.[37] This exterior act itself can be apprehended as good or bad. Aquinas writes, "the interior act is called bad on account of the exterior act just as on account of the object."[38]

The solution to this difficulty is that the exterior act is both an object and an end. Insofar as the exterior act is apprehended as in accordance with reason, it is apprehended as good. Aquinas in the *Prima secundae*, q. 20, a. 1, states, "the exterior act is the object of the will, insofar as it is proposed to the will by reason as a certain apprehended good and ordered through reason."[39] In this text Aquinas concisely explains that the goodness comes from the end insofar as the exterior object is willed, but it comes from the exterior act itself insofar as the act is apprehended. This approach is most completely addressed in the *QDM*, q. 2, a. 3, where Aquinas explains that sin is present in both the interior and the exterior act.

The issue is "whether sin consists principally in an act of the will."[40] Aquinas begins by making distinctions. The first distinction is between

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sunt boni uel mali ex genere, et quod actus bonus ex genere est actus cadens supra debitam materiam, sicut pascere esurientem, actus autem malus ex genere est qui cadit supra indebitam materiam, sicut subtrahere aliena: materia enim actus dicitur obiectum ipsius."

[36] Aquinas, *QDM*, q. 2, a. 6, c.

[37] Aquinas, *QDM*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 1. For various texts, see Pilsner, *The Specification of Human Actions*, 76–91.

[38] Aquinas, *QDM*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 8 (*Editio Leonina*, VI: 37, ll. 152–154): "actus interior dicitur esse malus propter actum exteriorem sicut propter obiectum."

[39] Aquinas, *ST* I-II, q. 20, a. 1, ad 1 (*Editio Leonina*, VI: 153): "actus exterior est obiectum voluntatis, inquantum proponitur voluntati a ratione ut quoddam bonum apprehensum et ordinatum per rationem."

[40] Aquinas, *QDM*, q. 2, a. 3 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 35, ll. 1–2): "utrum peccatum principaliter consistit in actu uoluntatis."

exterior acts which are themselves bad and those which are bad because they come from a bad will. For the former he gives the standard three examples of theft, murder, and adultery. The significant difference here is that he mentions them precisely as exterior acts. As an example of the latter, he mentions giving alms out of vainglory. Such almsgiving is good in itself as an exterior act and bad only because of the further intention. Aquinas is concerned with exterior acts which are themselves bad, and within this group he makes two further distinctions. The first distinction with respect to such exterior acts is between different senses of "principally," namely "fundamentally" and "completely." The second distinction of evil exterior acts is between the act as apprehended and the act as executed.

With respect to an act's execution, sin is present fundamentally in the will's act. On this point he repeats the teaching of the earlier *Commentary on the Sentences*. With respect to the act's apprehension, Aquinas states that sin is present principally in the will if by "principally" we mean "completely." However, Aquinas argues that if "principally" means "fundamentally," then, for exterior acts that are themselves evil, sin consists primarily in apprehension of the exterior act, which is the interior act's object. It does not need circumstances to be evil, for by itself it lacks due measure, form, and order. This deformed act may be last in execution, but it is first in the agent's intention. The intention of a deformed exterior act is itself a sinful interior act. With respect to its apprehension, a sinful exterior act such as theft or adultery specifies the interior act of willing.

This teaching explains the solution to the two difficulties mentioned at the outset of this paper, namely, how both the end and the object can be described as playing the principal role in moral goodness, and how the interior act's object can be the same as its end. An act is specified not by its remote end, which is a circumstance, but by the proximate end or *finis operis*, which is the object. The proximate end that is the object of the interior act is the exterior act as it is apprehended but not as it is executed. This apprehended exterior act can be willed as an end because it is apprehended as good. The apprehension of the exterior act as morally good or bad is based on a perceived conformity to reason or a rule.

Aquinas's developed view in the *ST*

Keeping these points in mind, it is easier to address apparent problems in the *Prima secundae*. Consider the following text from q. 18, a. 6, which

is on the role of the end in specifying an act as good or bad. In this text Aquinas writes:

> However, the end is properly the object of the interior voluntary act; but that on which it bears [*circa quod*] is the exterior act, which is its object. Therefore, just as the exterior act receives [its] species from the object on which it bears; so the interior act of the will receives [its] species from the end, just as from its proper object […]. [T]he species of human act formally is considered according to the end, but materially according to the object of the interior act. Whence the Philosopher says in Book V of the *Ethics*, that he who steals in order to commit adultery is, per se speaking, more adulterer than thief.[41]

If one is unfamiliar with Aquinas's other works, the relationship between the two objects in this passage can seem unclear. Is adultery an interior act that has theft as its object? Is adultery the only end to be considered, or is the theft itself a kind of end? To some extent this passage recalls the already mentioned difficulty of Ramirez, which is whether Aquinas means to focus on the due order of reason or on the end. A related problem stretches back to earlier commentators.

 Thomas de Vio Cajetan (1469–1534) argues that the end is the object of the interior act, and that any circumstances, including that of the end, belong to the exterior act.[42] Someone who steals for the sake of adultery is really an adulterer because the end of his interior act is not theft but adultery. Cajetan's interpretation reflects Albert's view that any circumstances belong to the exterior act. Bartholomew Medina (1527–1581) and many subsequent Thomists hold that the interior and exterior acts are the same act and that they share the same circumstances.[43] Killing someone belongs to the very same species that willing to kill someone does. According to this line of interpretation, the proximate object is the end of the work

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[41] Aquinas, *ST* I-II, q. 18, a. 6, c. (*Editio Leonina*, VI: 132–133): "Finis autem proprie est obiectum interioris actus voluntarii: id autem circa quod est actio exterior, est obiectum eius. Sicut igitur actus exterior accipit speciem ab obiecto circa quod est; ita actus interior voluntatis accipit speciem a fine, sicut a proprio obiecto […]. [A]ctus humani species formaliter consideratur secundum finem, materialiter autem secundum obiectum exterioris actus. Unde Philosophus dicit, in V Ethic., quod 'ille qui furatur ut committat adulterium est per se loquendo, magis adulter quam fur.'" Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, II, 1130a24–25. For the many current and conflicting attempts to interpret this passage, see the discussion and notes in Martin Rhonheimer, "The Moral Object of Human Acts and the Role of Reason According to Aquinas: A Restatement and Defense of My View," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 18 (2011): 454–506, at 489–494.

[42] Cajetan, *In I-II*, q. 18, a. 4, nn. 2–3 (*Editio Leonina*, VI: 130–131); *In I-II*, q. 10, a. 2, nn. 1–9 (*Editio Leonina*, VI: 155–157).

[43] Medina, *In I-II*, q. 18, a. 4, in *Scholastica Commentaria in D. Thomae Aquinatis Doct. Angelici Primam Secundae* (Cologne: Petrus Henningius, 1618), 412–414.

(*finis operis*), whereas the agent's additional end (*finis operantis*) is a circumstance.[44] Someone who steals to commit adultery both wills the proximate end of adultery and the remote end of theft. The remote end is more formal, but the act is specified by its proximate end. It seems to me that Medina's interpretation is more consistent with Aquinas's teaching in the *QDM* that an act's badness can be fundamentally present in the exterior act, which is the will's object and end.

How can we reconcile the thesis that the exterior act specifies the interior act with the thesis that the end is the object of the interior act? In many passages, including the *Prima secundae*, q. 2, a. 6, ad 9, Aquinas states that acts are specified by the proximate end.[45] It is confusing that Aquinas seems to be discussing specification by the remote end in the previously quoted q. 18, a. 6. If someone commits theft for the sake of adultery, the theft is the proximate end and adultery is the remote end. In this passage, the remote end specifies.

The problem, as some Thomists have noted, is that there are really two different acts that can be considered: an interior act that only commands, namely the interior act of adultery, and the interior act that both is commanded by the act of adultery and itself commands another act, namely the interior act of theft. Thomists have sometimes used the contrast between simple almsgiving and almsgiving for the sake of penance in order to illustrate the distinction between the interior and exterior act in such a context.[46] In the case of giving alms merely for helping the poor, the interior act consists of acts that belong to the will itself, whereas the exterior acts belong to other powers that are used by the will. For instance, the movement of the hands towards the wallet is part of the exterior act. The interior act includes intending and choosing to give money to the poor person. The exterior act belongs to powers that are used by the will, such as the ability to move one's hands and arms.

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[44] Medina attributes this interpretation to Francis Vitoria's (d. 1546) reading of Aquinas, *In Sent* II, d. 36, q. 1, a. 5, ad 5, and *QDM*, q. 2, a. 4, ad 9. See Medina, *Commentaria*, 414. I have been unable to find Vitoria's reference. For the same doctrine, see Salmanticenses, *Cursus theologicus*, Tract. XI, disp. 5, dub. 1, n. 1, in *Cursus theologicus*, vol. 6 (Paris: Palmé / Brussels: Albanel: 1878): 99. For the distinction between *finis operis* and *finis operantis*, see Aquinas, *In Sent* IV, d. 16, q. 3, a. 1, nn. 155–156; *ST* II-II, q. 141, a. 6, ad 1. For more texts and a discussion, see Lottin, *Psychologie et morale,* IV: 489–517; Jensen, *Good and Evil Actions*, 28–34.

[45] In addition to the texts mentioned by Medina, see Aquinas, *In Sent* II, d. 38, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3; *In Sent* IV, d. 16, q. 3, a. 1, n. 155; *QDM*, q. 2, a. 6, ad 9; *QDM*, q. 2, a. 67, ad 9; *QDM*, q. 8, a. 1, ad 14; *ST* I-II, q. 7, a. 3, ad 3; *ST* I-II, q. 60, a. 1, ad 3; *ST* II-II, q. 11, a. 1, ad 2; *ST* II-II, q. 111, a. 3, ad 3.

[46] Salmanticenses, *Cursus theologicus*, Tract. XI, disp. 6, dub. 4, nn. 60–61 (*Cursus theologicus*, VI: 151–152).

A more complicated case is when someone performs the same kind of act for another purpose, such as satisfaction for sins. In such a case there is more than one interior act. For instance, the agent first might will to do penance for his sins, which is an act that belongs to the virtue of penance. There are different ways to do penance, but one good way is to relieve the poor. This act of willing to relieve the poor is itself an act that belongs to the virtue of mercy, but it is commanded by an interior act that belongs to the virtue of penance. The exterior act of moving one's hands toward the wallet and opening it is commanded by both virtues. It resembles the simple act of almsgiving, but it also belongs to another species, namely penance.

Stealing in order to commit adultery can be analyzed in a similar fashion.[47] The interior act of adultery has the exterior act of adultery as its proximate end. The theft is not an end but a means to the end. In contrast, if one considers the interior act which both is commanded and commands, namely that of theft, then this interior act of theft has the exterior act of adultery as its proximate end. Considered in this latter manner, the adultery is merely a circumstance of the one act of theft, which consists of both an interior and an exterior act.

The *QDM*'s discussion of the interior act as the formality [*ratio*] of the exterior act is especially helpful for this case. The interior act is that under which the exterior act is apprehended or willed, just as means are willed under the formality of the ends, and conclusions known under the formality of the principles. The interior act can exist without the exterior, but the exterior cannot be separated from the interior. Someone who steals to commit adultery may find a better means to commit adultery. In such a case, he will no longer steal. The theft has the formal characteristic of adultery because it is willed for the sake of adultery. But materially it remains theft. Moreover, the theft itself, considered as an exterior act with its own disorder, has adultery as its remote end, which is a circumstance. Its object is simply "another's property."

This discussion in the *Prima secundae*, q. 18, a. 6, similarly invokes a case in which there are two interior acts and consequently distinct proximate ends, namely adultery and theft. The proximate end of the act, that is, adultery itself is also the remote end and circumstance of the theft. The interior act of theft commands the exterior act of theft, but it is also commanded by the interior act of adultery. Similarly, when someone gives

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[47] Cf. Salmanticenses, *Cursus theologicus*, Tract. XI, disp. 6, dub. 4, n. 68 (*Cursus theologicus*, VI: 154–155). They consider committing adultery for the sake of theft.

alms out of vainglory, the interior act of vainglory gives a formal charac-
ter to the material act of almsgiving. In such cases where an interior act
both commands and is commanded, the proximate end is formal with
respect to that particular act, but merely material with respect to the act
that commands.[48]

In the *Secunda secundae*, Aquinas mentions the same case but in reverse,
namely that of someone who commits adultery in order to steal:

> vices have species from their proximate end, but from the remote end they
> have their genus and cause. Just as when someone commits adultery so
> that he might steal, there is there a certain species of adultery from its own
> object, but from the last end it is shown that the adultery arises from theft,
> and is contained under it just as an effect under its cause, or as a species
> under its genus.[49]

In this case, the adultery materially belongs to intemperance but formally
to justice. The interior act of theft is one act of the will that commands
both the exterior act of theft and the adultery. The interior and exterior
acts of adultery in this case are the matter of the act of theft. Nevertheless,
the primary species of this second act comes from the chosen object,
which is adultery. But the remote end gives the act a different formal char-
acter of theft.

Aquinas makes a similar distinction in the *QDM*, q. 8, a. 1, but he
distinguishes between the act and the habit.[50] In obj. 14 he argues that
the number of capital sins might be reduced if sins could be subordinated
to an end in the same way. Aquinas replies by noting that subordination
to a further end does not change the characteristic of sin, since the sin is
specified not by these further ends but by the proximate end. In obj. 15
it is argued that since someone who steals to commit adultery is more
of an adulterer than a thief, it follows that what would normally be theft
becomes a sin of adultery. In the reply Aquinas agrees that the agent is
an adulterer rather than a thief, but thinks that the agent is denomi-
nated a thief or an adulterer by the habit and not by a particular act.
Since intention comes from the habit, and the intention in stealing is to

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[48] Salmanticenses, *Cursus theologicus*, Tract. XI, disp. 6, dub. 4, n. 64 (*Cursus theologicus*, VI: 153).

[49] Aquinas, *ST* II-II, q. 11, a. 1, ad 2 (*Editio Leonina*, VIII: 97): "vitia habent speciem ex fine proximo,
sed ex fine remoto habent genus et causam. Sicut cum aliquis moechatur ut furetur, est ibi quidem
species moechiae ex proprio fine et obiecto, sed ex fine ultimo ostenditur quod moechia ex furto
oritur, et sub eo continetur sicut effectus sub causa vel sicut species sub genere." See the discus-
sion of this and similar texts in Salmanticenses, *Cursus theologicus*, Tract. XI, disp. 6, dub. 4, n. 65
(*Cursus theologicus*, VI: 153–154).

[50] Aquinas, *QDM*, q. 8, a. 1, ad 14 and 15.

commit adultery, the agent has the habit of adultery and not that of theft. Nevertheless, the act itself remains one of theft.

Conclusion

The *QDM*'s explicit teaching on the essential goodness or badness of the exterior act explains many of the difficulties that arise when the *Prima secundae* is read in isolation. It is true that the act is specified by the end, but this end is proximate and not remote. The exterior act is this end, since reason regards it as something good that can be intended and chosen. If the end were not apprehended as good, then it could not specify the interior act and form one act with it. The remote end is merely a circumstance. Nevertheless, the remote end itself can specify a further act. For instance, when someone intends to steal in order to commit adultery, there is not only an act of theft, but there is also an interior act of adultery which commands the act of theft. Similarly, when someone gives alms in satisfaction for sin, there is not only a merciful act of giving alms, but an interior act of penance which commands the act of almsgiving. Such further ends are formal, but strictly speaking they specify only those interior acts that bear directly on them. The end and other circumstances belong to the exterior act in the same way that they belong to the interior act.

The *QDM* illustrates how Aquinas absorbs the terminology and major theses of his contemporaries into his own more comprehensive and consistent approach. Earlier thinkers defend two theses that are difficult to reconcile with each other, namely (1) that some exterior acts are generically bad, and (2) that only interior acts are essentially good or bad. In the *QDM*, Aquinas explicitly addresses this problem by stating that the exterior act can be essentially good or bad, and that it is the proximate end and object of the interior act. Since the interior act wills the end, it wills the formality [*ratio*] under which the whole act is willed. The exterior act is essential but only material. The interior and exterior acts do not form the one human act merely as cause and effect, but also as matter and form.

Many problems in understanding Aquinas's treatment of the human act in his *Prima secundae*, qq. 18–20, are dissolved if we remember that the act is specified primarily by the proximate end, which is the exterior act as apprehended, and that the remote end is merely a circumstance of both the interior and the exterior acts. Although this remote end may be more formal than the act that it commands, it does not specify the object that is

given by the proximate end of the will, which is the apprehended exterior act. Someone who steals to commit adultery is more an adulterer than a thief, and his act of theft has a formal character of adultery. Nevertheless, the commanded interior act of theft takes its species from its own proximate end, which is the apprehended exterior act of theft.

Evil and moral failure in De malo

Carl N. Still and Darren E. Dahl

Moral failure belongs to the common experience of us all. But why should it happen that we sometimes fail to act according to our own best judgments or, worse still, act directly contrary to them? We typically think that we should be masters of our action, able to make rational choices even in the face of challenging circumstances. When we fail to do so, we experience frustration if not a kind of moral humiliation. If such lapses resulted from a lack of power on our part, we might expect to feel frustration but not humiliation. Nor is this simply a matter of making mistakes in our choices in much the same way as we make intellectual mistakes. Unlike simple mistakes, moral failures turn us into failed agents, responsible for acting contrary to our own expectations. As a result, moral failure is even worse than failing to choose the best means to the ends we seek. It involves the very ends of our action itself. To ask about moral failure, then, is to ask about who we are as moral agents.

Aquinas's *QDM* present an extended study of moral failure, beginning with a consideration of evil (*malum*) in metaphysical terms and extending through a consideration of sin in general to an analysis of original sin, the seven capital sins, and demonic evil. Aquinas's *malum* is both wider and less dramatic than our term "evil," since *malum* includes anything lacking order, from crimes like murder to defective things like a lame foot. While Aquinas considers any act lacking due order a sin (*peccatum*), he distinguishes those that are voluntary under the concept of "moral wrong" (*culpa*). In this context, then, Aquinas notes that "sin (*peccatum*) is evidently more general than moral wrong (*culpa*), although the common usage of theologians takes sin and moral wrong to be the same."[1] Thus,

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[1] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 33, ll. 139–142). Except where otherwise noted, we have used Richard Regan's translation of *QDM* in *On Evil*, ed. Brian Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), with occasional modifications.

Aquinas's concept of sin (*peccatum*) differs from ours as well, insofar as we regard sin as theological in nature. Since *peccatum* and *culpa* signify acts lacking due order, both can be seen as departures from the order of reason and so treated philosophically. While there is a theological dimension to sin as a departure from divine law, we will focus primarily on voluntary wrongdoing as culpable in the light of reason. In this sense, moral failure relates most directly to *culpa* in *QDM*.

At the heart of moral failure is the will. Aquinas considers the will (*voluntas*) to be both an appetite for certain kinds of objects and at the same time a capacity able to choose among alternatives.[2] As the will is intrinsically connected to the intellect, our choices are the result of an interaction between those two capacities as well as our sensory desires. As we shall see, Aquinas's analysis of the interactions between intellect, will, and sensory desires reveals fault lines where the process of decision-making can deviate into moral wrongdoing.

We propose to approach the topic of moral failure in the *QDM* under four headings: (1) how Aquinas develops the traditional account of evil as privation; (2) how he handles privation in relation to the will; (3) how he understands the relationship between the will and evil acts; and finally, (4) how the special case of *malitia* highlights the gravity of moral failure in the context of his treatment of moral evil. *Malitia* is often translated into English as "malice" or "intentional wrongdoing." But both translations are limited: where "malice" suggests violent or particularly hateful acts and so puts the emphasis on a particular kind of act, "intentional wrongdoing" suggests an intention or will that is openly turned to evil in and for itself. The focus of *malitia*, however, is elsewhere. Rather than pointing to particular acts, it points to the way an act is done. In pointing to the manner of the act, however, the concept presents a more nuanced relationship between the will, the act, and the agent than "intentional wrongdoing" would suggest. Aquinas's treatment of *malitia* thus provides the best vantage on the crucial question of why a human agent knowingly and willfully chooses a failed path of moral action.

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[2] Aquinas presents his conception of the will as an intellectual appetite in *ST* I, q. 80, a. 2 and q. 82, aa. 1–2; he discusses the will's capacity for free choice (*liberum arbitrium*) in *ST* I, q. 83. As a passive capacity, the will is moved by intellect, specifically intellect's presentation of an apprehended object as something to be desired or avoided. Because it is an appetite at the level of intellect, the will desires singular things under a universal characterization, as something useful or good (*ST* I, q. 80, a. 2, ad 2). For an analysis of *liberum arbitrium* in *QDM*, see the chapter by Hoffmann and Furlong in the present volume.

The problem of evil as privation

Aquinas's treatment of moral agency in *QDM* takes place within the traditional ontological framework that he inherits for addressing the question of *malum*. Thanks to the influence of both Augustine and Dionysius the Areopagite, he takes for granted the basic understanding of evil as privation of the good (*priuatio boni*). As a privation, evil has no positive ontological reality and cannot be willed for itself as if it were good.[3] Thus, *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1 argues for the privative nature of evil in general by claiming that while evil may exist as a privation in an existing subject – like a cavity in a tooth – it is not an entity itself. This analysis serves well for things, but in relation to human action the strictly privative nature of evil becomes ambiguous. Aquinas observes that evil is said to be more contrary to good in moral matters than in the things of nature, "since moral matters depend on the will, and the object of the will is good or evil."[4] Aquinas develops this point in replying to another objection:

> [G]ood and evil are differences only in moral matters, regarding which we positively affirm something to be evil, since we call the very act of the will evil by reason of what is willed, although we could only will the evil itself under the aspect of the good.[5]

Moral matters defy easy treatment by the concept of privation because acts of the will bear a unique relationship to external moral acts. Inasmuch as human acts are positive expressions of being, they require an account that recognizes this positivity.[6]

Aquinas thus faces a major challenge in handling the Augustinian-Dionysian privation account of evil: how will he describe moral evil (*culpa*) so as to recognize both the ontological truth in the

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[3] Augustine, *ENC*, c. 14; Dionysius, *DN*, c. 4. In *QDM*, qq. 1–3 Aquinas appeals especially to Dionysius's claims that "as evil is nothing intrinsically existing, so evil is nothing positively existing in a subject" (*QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1) and "[n]o one by acting intends evil as the object chiefly willed" (*QDM*, q. 3, a. 12, ad 1).

[4] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 6, ll. 302–303): "quia moralia ex uoluntate dependent, uoluntatis autem obiectum est bonum et malum."

[5] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 12 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 8, ll. 410–415): "[B]onum et malum non sunt differentie nisi in moralibus, in quibus malum positiue aliquid dicitur, secundum quod ipse actus uoluntatis denominatur malus a uolito, licet et ipsum malum non possit esse uolitum nisi sub ratione boni." Aquinas holds the standard scholastic position that "the will can tend to nothing except under the aspect of good (*sub ratione boni*)" (*ST* I, q. 82, a. 2, ad 1). For quotations from the *ST* we have used the corrected version of Laurence Shapcote's translation in *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Anton C. Pegis, 2 vols. (New York: Random House, 1945), with minor modifications.

[6] Aquinas defends the positivity of human acts and their relation to the positivity of being, including God as the source of being, in *QDM*, q. 3, a. 2.

privation account of evil and the positive nature of the human act as such?[7] More precisely, how will Aquinas account for what we might call "privative action" or, more paradoxically, "positive privation"? At the center of this puzzle is the relationship between the will, the actions attributable to it, and the agent.

In *QDM*, q. 1, aa. 2 and 3 Aquinas sets the stage for a transformation of the privation account of evil in relation to the will. With the Aristotelian concepts of form, potentiality, actuality, and perfection as his tools, he sets forth a sophisticated account of human agency. Aquinas prepares the conceptual groundwork in *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2 by showing that both the Augustinian-Dionysian privation account of evil and Aristotle's teleological metaphysics are animated by the same concern for the primacy of the good: namely, that the most universally good end is the most real and desirable thing.[8] We may call this the desiderative principle. For this reason all things tend to the good and nothing tends to evil as evil. In Aristotelian terms, Aquinas claims that everything has potentiality for the good, "since having potentiality is simply being ordained for actuality."[9] As a result, everything that is not already perfect or fully actualized is becoming good to the extent that it is becoming what its form intends it to be when perfected. For example, one becomes a good zither player by perfecting the skill of zither playing. The potential for zither playing is perfected in the full actualization of the skill of zither playing. Until the skill is perfected, however, one's zither playing is good not in its perfection, but in its potential for perfection.[10]

In this paradigm, evil is the "privation of a due perfection, and privation is only a potential being, since we say that things that nature designs to possess a perfection that they do not have are deprived."[11] Precisely because potentiality underlies both perfection and privation, it is not to

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[7] Gregory M. Reichberg addresses this issue in "Beyond Privation: Moral Evil in Aquinas's *De Malo*," *The Review of Metaphysics* 55 (2002): 751–784. Reichberg argues that the concept of privation serves Aquinas in a limited fashion and must be supplemented by an oppositional understanding of evil when it comes to the complexity of human agency. We argue below that privation is not so much supplemented by Aquinas as thoroughly deepened by reflecting on the realities of human agency in an Aristotelian light.

[8] See also *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, c.: "[S]ince the desirable moves desire, and the first cause of movement is necessarily itself unmoved, the first and universal efficient cause is necessarily itself the first and universal desirable thing, that is, the first and universal good, which produces all things because of the love of its very self."

[9] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 10, ll. 148–149): "cum esse in potentia nichil aliud sit quam ordinari in actum."

[10] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, ad 14.

[11] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 11, ll. 196–199): "priuatio debite perfectionis, priuatio autem non sit nisi in ente in potentia, quia hoc priuari dicimus quod natum est habere aliquid et non habet."

be equated with or reduced to privation alone. As the privation of a due perfection, evil is identified as privative only insofar as it inhibits a thing's natural path to its perfection. Thus, by saying that privation is a certain kind of potential being, Aquinas not only makes room for the inherited notion of *priuatio boni*, but also opens the door to an understanding of privation as a *positive* inhibiting cause of a thing's – or a person's – failure to reach the perfection to which each is ordained. If our zither player fails to become proficient, Aquinas will seek the cause of his failure to reach his end in an inhibiting form (e.g., the pleasure he takes in watching television). It is this inhibiting form that deprives him of his end by directing him toward the more proximate end of attaining pleasure.

Privation accounts of evil can also produce the impression that at the heart of a thing there is a "nothing" that threatens to reduce the good of the thing or destroy it entirely. For Aquinas, this cannot be the case. Potentiality cannot cause privation because potentiality, as we have seen, is oriented to the good.[12] In fact, in order to preserve the goodness of the created order in relation to God, Aquinas insists that privation must be understood positively, as a form contrary to a thing's due perfection.

To understand this counterintuitive claim we turn to *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, where the deficiency of the will in moral action is introduced. The immediate concern of the article is whether good is the cause of evil. Evil cannot have an intrinsic cause as this would require it to be the object of desire, which is impossible given the sole desirability of the good. On the other hand, evil must have some kind of cause; otherwise it would have to be posited as immanent in nature itself, which would entail the same metaphysical dualism implicit in recognizing it as the object of desire. Now, given that evil is outside the order of nature and cannot have an intrinsic cause, it must have an accidental cause.[13] But since all accidental causes must finally be traced back to an intrinsic cause, and only what is good can be an intrinsic cause, it follows that good must be the accidental cause of evil.

What does it mean for evil to have an "accidental" cause? Accidental causes are contingent, and their contingency can be connected to the notion of deficiency. To illustrate the contingent aspect of an accidental cause, Aquinas gives an example: a sufficiently powerful fire will

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[12] Aquinas emphasizes this feature of privation: "A subject does not cause evil, since evil is not in a subject as a natural accident, just as potentiality does not cause privation. And again, evil has an external cause by accident, not intrinsically" (*QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, ad 6).

[13] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c.

accidentally cause water not to exist. Here "accidental" refers to the contingent confrontation of two opposed forms in which one deprives the other of its perfection. As fire dries up water, it deprives water of its form; in other words, one form acts privatively in relation to another by inhibiting it. Here we see the connection back to the argument in *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2 where evil brings about privation by inhibiting a thing's intended perfection.

In many cases in nature, however, the relation of inhibiting forms is not so direct as in the case of fire and water. In fact, the most challenging cases are those in which the source of the evil seems to come from within the good thing itself. To explore a case like this Aquinas turns to the Aristotelian example of the birth of a deformed creature.[14] He explains that the cause of a monster's birth is the deficient power in the semen. Lest we think that the deficient cause is natural to the semen, however, he adds: "[I]f we seek the cause of the deficiency that is the evil in the semen, we will come to a good that causes the evil by accident and not insofar as the good is deficient."[15] Here deficiency is understood not as a natural lack in an existing thing, but instead as the outcome of an accident: specifically, an accidental inhibition of one form by another in which the intended actualization is prevented. In this case, Aquinas argues, the semen is deficient because of a mutation that produces a quality contrary to what is required for the right disposition of the semen.[16] As a result, the monstrous birth is an accidental evil outcome brought about by a perfectly good mutation within the semen.

In natural things, then, evil comes about as a positive privation. As natural entities seek their perfection, they come into conflict with inhibiting forms that are themselves seeking their perfection. Even where it appears that a lack exists naturally within the good itself, Aquinas argues that if we examine the matter carefully, we will find the accident that draws a privative effect from a positive potentiality.

Evil and the will

We turn now specifically to human moral agency, which occupies a unique place in the discussion of privation. Unlike natural things,

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[14] See Aristotle, *Physics* II, 14, 199b3–7.

[15] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 15, ll. 213–216): "si queratur causa huius defectus quod est malum seminis, erit deuenire ad aliquod bonum, quod est causa mali per accidens et non in quantum est deficiens."

[16] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c.

human moral action is subject to the power of the will. Our question thus becomes how to understand the failure of the will in terms of the positive account of privation just advanced. In the case of accidental causation, the "will causes evil by accident when the will is borne to something that is good in some respect but is linked to something that is unqualifiedly evil."[17] As with natural things, the accidental involves both contingency – insofar as the agent does not directly intend what is evil – and the influence of an inhibiting or opposing form that draws the will away from its due end. In nature this opposition can occur as two physical entities seek their actualization, as when fire meets water. In the field of free human agency we must be able to explain what draws the will toward something seemingly or partially good while diverting the will from a better choice. For Aquinas, an explanation becomes possible when the concept of deficiency is transposed into the domain of human freedom.

With the notion of a deficient will we begin to see the grounds of moral failure. In a much discussed passage Aquinas argues that the "will as a deficient good causes evil because the will necessarily considers a deficiency before making the very choice that is deficient, the choice wherein the will chooses something good in some respect but evil in an absolute sense."[18] Employing the metaphor of a carpenter, Aquinas explains that this initial, volitional manifestation of deficiency is best described as the nonuse of the rule of reason and divine law:

> [S]uppose there is a carpenter who ought to cut a piece of wood straight by using a ruler; if he does not cut straight, which is to make a bad cut, the bad cutting will be due to his failure to use the ruler or measuring bar. Likewise, pleasure and everything else in human affairs should be measured and regulated by the rule of reason and God's law. And so the nonuse of the rule of reason and God's law is presupposed in the will before the will made its disordered choice.[19]

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[17] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 16, ll. 245–248): "per accidens quidem in quantum uoluntas fertur in aliquid quod est bonum secundum aliquid, set habet coniunctum quod est simpliciter malum."

[18] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 16, ll. 248–252): "set ut bonum deficiens in quantum oportet in uoluntate preconsiderare aliquem defectum ante ipsam electionem deficientem, per quam eligit secundum quid bonum quod est simpliciter malum."

[19] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 16, ll. 258–267): "Si ergo sit aliquis artifex qui debeat aliquod lignum recte incidere secundum aliquam regulam, si non directe incidat, quod est male incidere, hec mala incisio causabitur ex hoc defectu quod artifex erat sine regula et mensura. Similiter delectatio et quodlibet aliud in rebus humanis est mensurandum et regulandum secundum regulam rationis et legis diuine; unde non uti regula rationis et legis diuine preintelligitur in uoluntate ante inordinatam electionem."

This metaphor of the negligent carpenter[20] connects volitional deficiency to the positive privation of deficiency in nature. Central to this point is the force and counter force that we have already seen in his discussion of natural deficiency. As an appetitive capacity the will is inclined toward happiness, which is its final end. As it seeks that end through its acts, however, it is constantly at risk of being drawn off course by opposing and inhibiting forms such as pleasure.

A prime example of an opposing and inhibiting form that draws the will from its true end can be found in the passions of the sensory appetite. While sensory appetite is inferior to the will, Aquinas holds that a passion of the sensory appetite can change one's perception of what is good and fitting.[21] When famished, we may eat things that we would otherwise not eat. When angry, we are prone to saying things that we would not think of saying when calm. In such cases, the sensory appetite affects the will by changing one's perception of the suitability of the object. Consequently, our sensory appetites also "resist reason, inasmuch as we sense or imagine something pleasant that reason forbids, or something unpleasant that reason commands."[22] In *ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 2 Aquinas goes further when he recognizes that the sensory appetites not only can run contrary to the will's direction but can also bend the will to their course. Here we see a fault line for the will: while it takes as its object an apprehended good, the assessment of objects is subject to the condition of the perceiver. An agent in the grip of passion will be disposed to apprehend and choose differently from one whose sensory appetites are under the control of reason. Reason and divine law function, therefore, as measures to preserve the will from

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[20] Starting with Jacques Maritain's analysis in *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1942), this metaphor of the negligent carpenter and the earlier claim that the will "considers a deficiency" before making a deficient choice has received much attention. For bibliographical references to Maritain's work and its reception, as well as a discussion of other issues at stake, see John F. Wippel's chapter in this volume. Further discussion of the non-consideration of the rule can be found in *Aquinas & Maritain on Evil: Mystery and Metaphysics*, ed. James G. Hanink (Washington, D. C.: American Maritain Association, 2013), especially the chapters by Jonathan J. Sanford, Bernadette E. O'Connor, and Steven A. Long; Lawrence Dewan, "St. Thomas and the First Cause of Moral Evil," in *Wisdom, Law, and Virtue: Essays in Thomistic Ethics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 186–196; and Reichberg, "Beyond Privation," 751–784. We believe that the nonuse of the rule and the pre-consideration of a deficiency, where the concept of deficiency signals a positively inhibiting form, are crucial to understanding Aquinas's reconsideration of *priuatio* in relation to human agency. As a result, they must be understood in the wider context of *QDM*, qq. 1–3.

[21] *ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina*, VI: 77).

[22] *ST* I, q. 81, a. 3, ad 2 (*Editio Leonina*, V: 291): "rationi repugnare, per hoc quod sentimus vel imaginamur aliquod delectabile quod ratio vetat, vel triste quod ratio praecipit." Cf. *ST* I-II, q. 17, a.7, c., which describes how suddenly produced sensory appetites escape the command of reason. See also *ST* I-II, q. 77, aa. 1–2.

making bad choices.[23] The deficiency that Aquinas argues is at the root of human moral failure is thus signaled by the nonuse of these guiding measures that keep the will on track to the complete and final good.

In natural things the movement from potentiality to actuality is inhibited by a positive privation that deprives the thing of its intended perfection. In moral matters it is the will's neglect of the guiding rule that allows another force – such as pleasure – to influence its direction toward a deficient end. The result is a "privation of due measure or form or order" resulting from "the positing of another measure or form or order."[24] Importantly, however, this initial deficiency is "conceived prior to sin" and "does not have the aspect either of moral wrong or of punishment," but is in fact "a simple negation (*negatio pura*)."[25] In fact, Aquinas argues that such a negation in the will is possible because the will is created and is therefore "subject to another as its rule or measure."[26] It is only when the will makes a choice based on its nonuse of the rule of reason and divine law that it is responsible for its own moral failure.

Privative acts

We turn now to Aquinas's second challenge in accounting for human moral failure in the inherited language of privation: what we previously called a "privative act." To unpack this notion, we must describe the will's nonuse of the rule of reason from the perspective of moral actions. *QDM*, q. 2 makes evident Aquinas's concern to describe the sort of evil characteristic of actions and, in particular, voluntary acts. With this concern in mind he initially puts the agent out of focus in order to foreground the actions themselves. But the heart of this analysis is the agent's embrace of the morally evil act.

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[23] In the *QDM* and *ST*, Aquinas refers to both these rules together, sometimes with the phrase "regula rationis *vel* legis divinae" (e.g., *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3 and q. 2, a. 2, *ST* I-II, q. 75, aa. 1 and 2) and sometimes with "regula rationis *et* legis divinae" (e.g., *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, ST I-II, q. 75, a. 1). In *ST* I-II, q. 71, a. 6, he describes the rule of the human will as twofold (*duplex*), with the divine (or eternal) law extending well beyond reason's reach by directing us in matters of faith. Because our approach here is primarily philosophical, we focus more on reason as a measure for action than divine law.

[24] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 4, ad 8 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 41, ll. 327–329): "priuatio debiti modi aut speciei uel ordinis"; "ad positionem alicuius modi uel speciei uel ordinis."

[25] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 6 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 16, ll. 325–329). Cf. ad 13 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 17, ll. 383–385): "defectus qui preintelligitur in uoluntate ante peccatum, non est culpa neque pena, set negatio pura."

[26] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 9 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 17, l. 354): "subiectum alteri sicut regule et mensure." God, on the other hand, "who is his own rule, cannot err, just as a carpenter could not err in cutting wood were he to use his hand as a ruler for the cutting."

In *QDM*, q. 2, a. 2 Aquinas develops his account of the relationship between the will and its acts, in the context of ascribing evil acts to the will. In response to the opinion that no act as such is a sin because all acts are positive, Aquinas argues that failed moral agency produces a genuinely sinful act. In order to support his case he returns to the distinction between the concepts of evil, sin, and moral wrong. Evil (*malum*) is the general category indicating any privation of form or order. Sin (*peccatum*) is that disorder when applied to actions. Finally, moral wrong (*culpa*) indicates disordered acts that are voluntary. Building on this distinction, he argues that a genuinely human evil act consists of three things: (1) the privation or deformity, (2) the external action in which the deformity is manifested, and (3) the specific act of the will by which the external action is imputed to the voluntary agent.[27] Aquinas uses the example of someone limping. Here the deformity is the lame foot, but the action of limping is the lame foot manifested in relation to the positive action of walking. This example is limited, however, in two important respects. First, Aquinas is ultimately concerned with instances in which the deformed act is intrinsically evil, that is, where the act itself is at odds with the rule of reason or divine law.[28] Second, Aquinas is concerned with the further implications of this deformed act when it is voluntarily embraced by an agent and can therefore be imputed to that agent. We need then to consider what he means by an intrinsically evil act and, secondly, how such an act is imputed to an agent acting voluntarily.

In *QDM*, q. 2, a. 4 Aquinas develops the rationale for an intrinsically evil act by showing that the nature of all acts is determined in reference to the proper perfection of the agent. He claims that what is proper to human acts is their relation to reason as a rule.[29] He argues, next, that acts are specified by their objects, where "object" indicates the end of the action. Consequently, inasmuch as what "belongs to something by nature of its genus […] [or] its species belongs to it intrinsically," it follows that "the objects of human acts that differ by something intrinsically belonging to reason […] will be specifically different as acts of reason."[30] This difference will make them either good or evil. Of course, some sins involve acts that are not intrinsically evil but only "evil insofar as they proceed

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[27] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 2, c.   [28] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 2, c.
[29] See *QDM*, q. 2, a. 4, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 40, l. 209): "regulam rationis"; see also ll. 161–162.
[30] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 4, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 39, ll. 170–172; 40, ll. 201–203): "per se conuenire alicui non solum quod conuenit ei ratione sui generis, set etiam quod conuenit ei ratione sue specie"; "obiecta humanorum actuum […] que habeant differentiam secundum aliquid per se ad rationem pertinens, erunt actus specie differentes secundum quod sunt actus rationis."

from a perverted intention or will."[31] Cases like these, however, do not present the same kind of problem as acts that are intrinsically evil. It is here that the agent comes back into focus. Intrinsically evil acts raise the question of the relationship between the act – which is evil without reference to a perverted will – and the voluntary execution of the act, which brings us back to the agent.

Aquinas chooses intrinsically evil acts to explore the depths of the will's nonuse of the rule of reason and thus its moral failure. His analysis is framed around the question of whether sin consists primarily of acts of the will or external acts. He deepens the previous analysis by drawing a distinction between the fundamental identity of the act in itself and the act in its completion. With respect to the former, the evil only belongs to the external act, since it is related to the object that reason determines to be lacking due measure.[32] However, when the agent is brought back into focus and the act is considered in its completion as an executed act, then the relationship between the act and the will becomes crucial. In that case what is crucial is the manner in which the will embraces the intrinsically evil act:

> [C]onsequently the nature of evil and sin is found originally in the exterior act so considered rather than in the act of the will, but the nature of fault and moral evil is completed according as the act of the will accedes to it, and thus the evil of fault is found in a complete manner in the act of the will.[33]

By embracing an intrinsically evil act, the will gives positive expression to its nonuse of the rule of reason. Although reason specifies the act itself as evil and a sin, the nonuse of the rule leads the will to embrace the act and so fall into moral wrong.

Adultery features prominently among the examples of intrinsically evil acts that Aquinas uses in *QDM*, qq. 2 and 3.[34] How exactly would Aquinas

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[31] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 36, ll. 60–61): "mali set secundum quod ex corrupta intentione uel uoluntate procedunt."

[32] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 3, c.

[33] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 36, ll. 84–89): "unde primordialiter inuenitur ratio mali et peccati in actu exteriori sic considerato quam in actu uoluntatis, set ratio culpe et moralis mali completur secundum quod accedit actus uoluntatis, et sic completiue malum culpe est in actu uoluntatis." Here we cite from the translation of *QDM* by Jean Oesterle (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995). Regan's translation surprisingly omits the final clause of the sentence, but nevertheless captures Aquinas's point that sin becomes moral wrong when the agent takes the evil act as his own.

[34] The *Index Thomisticus* provides 13 instances of the term *adulterium* in *QDM*, qq. 2 and 3. In addition to its being classically recognized as an intrinsically evil act and specifically forbidden by divine commandment, adultery provides a unique set of circumstances pertinent to the issues Aquinas is dealing with in *QDM*. In particular, it is a moral act whose natural power (to produce a child) differs from its categorization by reason as deformed.

account for someone committing an intrinsically evil act like adultery? In the *ST* he does not articulate such an example step by step, but from the detailed analysis of the internal "will-acts" that make up a choice, we may sketch an account of the decision-making process.[35] The potential adulterer must first *intend* the pleasure associated with adultery as his end.[36] Since we can only desire objects apprehended as good, reason will have grasped adultery – or some aspect of it – as a good to be desired and sought, where it might equally have grasped it as lacking in some good and thus to be avoided.[37]

Once one intends adultery, a further act of the will is required to choose the means to that end. Aquinas characterizes choice as "an act of the will already fixed on something to be done by the chooser."[38] Since choice occurs among alternatives, reason compares possible ends; our natural inclination to pleasure may be fulfilled in a variety of ways, though none perhaps more immediately and intensely than through sex.[39] Suppose, then, an opportunity for adultery presents itself. The would-be adulterer constructs a practical syllogism, in this case taking as its premises that pleasure is to be desired, and adultery will bring pleasure. Once the conclusion of that syllogism is drawn, a judgment (*iudicium*) is made about what is to be done, which is then followed by choice.[40] As an end, adultery requires various choices of means, including a partner for the act. As a means, one might also choose adultery solely for its pleasure, or for some further end like pride or revenge.

Before one can choose to commit adultery, reason must counsel the choice. Aquinas describes counsel as an inquiry into what means we should choose among the possible courses of action available to achieve our end. Any choice of means also involves considering the various circumstances that will affect how well the chosen means reaches the end. Since all of our actions take place across a background of many unknowns, taking all the relevant circumstances into consideration is no easy task for

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[35] We borrow the term "will-acts" from David M. Gallagher, "The Will and Its Acts (Ia IIae, qq. 6–17)," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 69–89, at 78.

[36] *ST* I-II, q. 12, a. 1, ad 4. As we will see in the following section on *malitia*, however, the precise nature of intending an intrinsically evil act is complicated.

[37] *ST* I-II, q. 13, a. 6, c.

[38] *ST* I-II, q. 13, a. 5, ad 1 (*Editio Leonina*, VI: 102): "Electio autem nominat actum voluntatis iam determinatum ad id quod est huic agendum."

[39] In discussing lust in *ST* II-II, q. 153, a. 4, c., Aquinas says that sexual pleasure is "very desirable as regards the sensitive appetite, both on account of the intensity of the pleasure and because such concupiscence is connatural to man." See also *QDM*, q. 15, a. 4, c.

[40] *ST* I-II, q. 13, a. 1, c. and ad 2; I-II, q. 13, a. 3, c.

any agent.[41] The potential adulterer must consider when, where, and with whom to commit adultery, as well as all of the prevailing conditions that might make it impossible to complete the act.

In addition to reason's counseling adultery, one must also consent to it. Aquinas treats consent (*consensus*) as an application of the appetitive power to a particular thing. This is in a sense the moment of truth in the sequence of the will's acts, since "the final decision of what is to be done is the consent to the act."[42] Consent is not a passive yielding of the appetite when confronted with what it desires, but rather an active self-determination of the appetite to an object.[43] It is thus in the power of the potential adulterer to consent or not to the means that counsel has recommended as suitable to the end. Once consent has been given, the act may be called voluntary.[44]

After the choice has been made, use (*usus*) and execution (*exercitium*) follow, which put the choice into action. From desiring pleasure as an end, the will must move to possess it. Once reason has established that adultery will serve as an effective means to the end of pleasure, and the will has given consent, the would-be adulterer moves from choice to the use of the soul's powers to attain it.[45] It is reason that commands the act to be performed in light of the will's choosing it. Aquinas summarizes the order of action like this:

> [A]fter the decision of counsel, which is reason's judgment, the will chooses; and after choice, the reason commands that power which has to do what is chosen; and then, last of all, someone's will begins the act of use by executing the command of reason.[46]

There would appear to be various moments in the process of internal willing when consideration of the rule of reason, the divine law, or even one's own beliefs might well derail the decisional path to adultery. But the would-be adulterer does not will adultery directly, and certainly not under its description as an evil act; instead, as we saw in *QDM*, he wills a good (e.g., pleasure) that is joined to something evil.

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[41] *ST* I-II, q. 14, a. 3, c.

[42] *ST* I-II, q. 15, a. 4, c. (*Editio Leonina*, VI: 112): "Finalis autem sententia de agendis est consensus in actum."

[43] *ST* I-II, q. 15, a. 2 ad 1.   [44] *ST* I-II, q. 15, a. 4, ad 2.

[45] *ST* I-II, q. 16, a. 4, c.

[46] *ST* I-II, q. 17, a. 3, ad 1 (*Editio Leonina*, VI: 120): "Quia post determinationem consilii, quae est iudicium rationis, voluntas eligit; et post electionem, ratio imperat ei per quod agendum est quod eligitur; et tunc demum voluntas alicuius incipit uti, exequendo imperium rationis." Aquinas gives a less detailed schema of the order of action in *ST* I-II, q. 15, a. 3, c.

Throughout this section we have seen that the proper object of moral analysis is an external action (e.g., adultery) and its relationship to a voluntary agent (the adulterer). By considering the internal will-acts described in the *ST*, we arrived at the important moment of consent, in which the agent appropriates the action as his own. It is specifically consent that leads to an understanding of the precise nature of imputation, which serves to connect the agent to the external act through the will. One could say that imputation is a secondary other-attribution made possible by the agent's implicit self-attribution in consenting to the act. To the implicit claim of consent – "I will commit adultery" – the judgment of imputation echoes – "You did it! You are guilty!"

While there is a relationship between a primary self-attribution (consent) and a secondary other-attribution (imputation), in some cases one attribution may be privileged and the other absent. For example, if I were to commit a moral offense but was not caught, the secondary attribution would be absent and, perhaps for that reason, my own consent to the act would be that much stronger: "I did it … and got away with it!" The opposite example (imputation without full consent) is more complex and points to the difficulty in ascribing guilt where there is no appropriation on the part of the agent. Aquinas deals with this in relation to sins from ignorance and weakness where other factors threaten the connection established by the agent and the act in consent. Nevertheless, in the analysis of the voluntary act itself, the relation of consent to imputation allows us to understand how an agent is connected to an intrinsically evil act in such a way that the act is ascribable to the agent as a positive instance of moral failure.

To summarize, the interplay of attributions allows Aquinas to describe a genuinely privative act in which the will's embrace of the act captures the positive moment – the fully voluntary appropriation of the act – while retaining its negative, deficient or privative moment – the nonuse of the rule as the occasion for the will's misdirection to the pleasure that accompanies an evil act. In relation to the positive moment, we can speak of a morally evil *act* with which the will is fundamentally identified and thus culpable. Nevertheless, in light of the negative moment, the act remains *evil* and privative. Far from losing sight of the moral agent in his foregrounding of moral actions in themselves, Aquinas provides an ontological ground for the experience of moral failure. At the root of the will is its inclination to be moved toward the objects presented to it as good. Such movement is at once positive yet subject to negation. This negation is, however, not a nothingness lurking in the shadows of its essence, but

simply the possibility of its being moved by the attraction of something contrary to reason.

We have discussed Aquinas's account of moral failure in reference to concepts that rely on metaphors of attraction and influence. The desiderative and teleological themes in *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1 provide the context for these root metaphors. By paying attention to them, and particularly how they inform Aquinas's reception of evil as privation, we have argued that moral failure is the result of attraction to a seemingly good object (e.g., pleasure) connected to an evil. The seductive falsity of the apparent good bends the proper direction of the will as guided by reason as its measure. After discussing the conditions of the will's nonuse of reason, analyzing how these conditions are manifest in moral acts, and showing how the agent himself is positively implicated in these acts, we are now in a position to explore a type of moral failure in which the focus moves fully from action to agent.

Malitia and moral failure

By highlighting intrinsically evil acts and the interplay of consent and imputation in voluntary moral action, Aquinas provides a bridge into the logic that governs *QDM*, q. 3 on the causes of sin. He begins by eliminating the possibility that sin is caused by an outside agent. God is discounted as a cause, and devils are conceded power only to persuade and dispose but not to intrinsically cause sin. Aquinas also considers the possibility that some internal cause other than the will might be responsible – for example, ignorance (*ignorantia*) or weakness (*infirmitas*).[47] His investigation culminates with a discussion of *malitia* where all exterior causes give way to a causation of sin in the will itself.

In the cases of ignorance, weakness, and *malitia*, the logical trajectory from exterior to interior remains in play. Both ignorance and weakness are causes of sin that act against the will by removing its measure (ignorance) or distorting its relationship to the measure (weakness). As a result,

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[47] We do not discuss here the details of Aquinas's analysis of sins from ignorance and weakness. For more on these issues, particularly that of weakness, see the contribution by Bonnie Kent and Ashley Dressel in this volume. See also Kent, "Transitory Vice: Thomas Aquinas on Incontinence," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 27 (1989): 199–223, and "Aquinas and Weakness of Will," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 75 (2007): 70–91. Much of the discussion of these issues involves an assessment of Aquinas's relation to Aristotle. For an explicit treatment from this perspective, see Martin Pickavé, "Aquinas on Incontinence and Psychological Weakness," in *Aquinas and the 'Nicomachean Ethics'* ed. Tobias Hoffmann, Jörn Müller, and Matthias Perkams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 184–202.

in both cases there is an opportunity to diminish fault by appealing to attenuating circumstances. While Aquinas will not allow a moral agent to claim that "the devil made me do it," both the ignorant and the weak agent can appeal to a failing that is not, at least initially, a moral one. But *malitia* is different, and as a result it becomes the test case in *QDM*, q. 3 as Aquinas asks: what does moral failure look like when its cause is the will itself?

In *QDM*, q. 3, a. 12 Aquinas addresses the greatest challenge for any privation account of evil: the possibility that the will itself could be the cause of moral wrong. While it is impossible to will evil directly, one can – as we saw in the case of the would-be adulterer – will an intended good (e.g., pleasure) to such an extent that one also wills a deformity (e.g., infidelity to one's spouse) in order to attain that good. In this case, the adulterer wills the pleasure primarily and the deformity secondarily. In order to take account of primary and secondary willing, Aquinas introduces the notions of "transient" and "permanent" goods. Moral failure can then be seen as a redirection of the agent from his permanent good to a transient good. He describes this redirection as a turning away or withdrawal from the permanent good. The ignorant agent "does not know that such turning away is connected with the transient good," while for the weak agent, an emotion "inclines the will to the transient good with which a deformity of sin is connected."[48] In the case of *malitia*, however, it is neither a lack of knowledge nor a force acting on the will that causes it to choose the transient good over the permanent good. It is habit:

> [W]hen customary behavior has, as it were, turned the inclination to such a [transient] good into a habit or natural disposition for the transient good [...] then the will of itself is inclined to the [transient] good by its own motion apart from any emotion."[49]

This, Aquinas concludes, "is to sin by choice, that is, deliberately, or purposely or even maliciously."[50]

Sins from ignorance, weakness, and *malitia* are clearly related in Aquinas's account. The importance of this relation lies in the ascending

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[48] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 12, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 92, ll. 147–148, 156–157): "nescit illi bono commutabili talem auersionem esse coniunctam"; "uoluntas inclinatur in bonum commutabile cui adiungitur deformitas peccati." The *sed contra* 1 introduces the theme of withdrawing by citing Job 34:27: "They deliberately, as it were, withdrew from God and did not want to know his ways."

[49] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 12, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 92, ll. 160–163): "quando per consuetudinem inclinari in tale bonum est ei iam uersum quasi in habitum et naturam: et tunc ex se proprio motu absque aliqua passione inclinatur in illud."

[50] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 12, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 92, ll. 164–165): "est peccare ex electione siue ex industria aut ex certa scientia aut etiam ex malitia."

scale of culpability that it implies. While it is more serious to sin out of weakness than ignorance, it is that much more serious to sin out of *malitia*. Significantly for our argument, the place of *malitia* on the scale of culpability can help us see how moral failure is at once fully positive as an external act of the will seeking the good and yet privative in its relation to the good. As we have seen, moral failures that result from ignorance and weakness undermine the attribution of the external act to the agent: the ignorant subject can claim "I did not know!" and the weak subject can protest "I could not help it!" If the proper object of moral analysis is the deformed act in relation to the voluntary agent, in ignorance and weakness there is an attenuation of this voluntary relation and so too of culpability.

But this is not the case with *malitia*. The first-time adulterer can claim weakness or even ignorance, but with the habitual adulterer the difference between primarily willing pleasure and only secondarily willing adultery disappears in the embrace of the secondary willing itself. When repeated behavior has turned the willing of pleasure-through-adultery into a habit, then the will is inclined to adultery by its own motion. In this sense, *malitia* is the full expression of the interplay of attributions in which the agent must finally acknowledge that he has fully consented to the evil deed not only as this or that disparate action but as his habitual practice. Where previously the agent's self-attribution required him only to admit "I have committed adultery," the self-attribution expressed in *malitia* becomes: "I am an adulterer." It is no longer a question of attributing evil to individual actions but of being able to attribute moral evil to agents themselves.

Conclusion

We have argued that Aquinas's analysis of moral failure deepens the traditional notion of evil as privation in relation to an Aristotelian account of human agency. We began by discussing Aquinas's treatment of this traditional account in reference to the Aristotelian concepts of form, potentiality, perfection, and privation. From this analysis we proposed the notion of a "positive privation." Second, we turned specifically to explore this "positive privation" in relation to the will. Here we encountered the centrality of Aquinas's idea of the nonuse of the rule of reason. Third, in order to understand how a "positive privation" is manifest as a "privative act," we examined Aquinas's understanding of the relationship between the will and intrinsically evil acts. Finally, we explored *malitia* as a limit case for moral failure in Aquinas's perspective.

We began by recognizing that moral failure is an experience common to us all. We can now appreciate a new dimension that Aquinas adds to our basic recognition: as finite and created agents, we live with moral failure as a part of our human experience. Of course we may not conceptualize moral failure in exactly the same way that Aquinas did. Where we tend to ask how we can act at odds with our own judgments and expectations, Aquinas conceived of voluntary wrongdoing as acting contrary to reason and divine law. Nevertheless, at the root of moral failure is the convergence of the positive fact of *being* an agent and the negative *experience* of that agency as failed. Such experience involves not only particular acts but habits formed by our own choices. Yet however constrained we are by our moral habits, we remain subjects responsible for the attributions of consent and imputation proper to our agency.[51]

Attention, intentionality, and mind-reading in Aquinas's De malo, *q. 16, a. 8*

Therese Scarpelli Cory

It is commonly assumed that for Thomas Aquinas, intentionality (the characteristic of mental states such that they are "about" an object) has to do merely with mental representation (the characteristic of a mental state such that it is "like" an object).[1] On this account, the reason that a thought of mine is about, say, the nature of ducks, is just that my intellect is activating an intramental likeness of duck-nature, which Aquinas calls an "intelligible species." Because this intelligible species itself is about duck-nature, any intellectual act that activates this species will likewise be about duck-nature.

I contend, however, that this account fails to consider the thinker's voluntary directing of attention, which is just as important as the intelligible species in determining what a thought is about. Indeed, scholars have largely overlooked the fact that Aquinas's cognition theory accommodates the phenomenon of attentiveness at all,[2] probably largely because he only infrequently describes it with the expected terms "attending" or "attention" (*attendere, attentio*). More commonly, he speaks of being "occupied" with something (*occupatio*, literally a "seizing"), or smuggles

[1] This is especially clear in Henrik Lagerlund, "Mental Representation in Medieval Philosophy," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2011 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta. URL = http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/representation-medieval/; see also Jeffrey E. Brower and Susan Brower-Toland, "Aquinas on Mental Representation: Concepts and Intentionality," *The Philosophical Review* 117 (2008): 193–243, at 202, n. 20; Claude Panaccio, "Angel's Talk, Mental Language, and the Transparency of the Mind," in *Vestigia, Imagines, Verba*, ed. Costantino Marmo (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 323–335, at 339; Robert Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 31–60; and Dominik Perler, *Theorien der Intentionalität im Mittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2004), 31–105.

[2] Two exceptions are André Hayen, *L'intentionnel selon saint Thomas*, 2nd rev. ed. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1954), with its brief references to attention (e.g., 162–163, 168–174, 218–222), and Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition*, 134–146, on sensory attention.

in attention under "intend" / "intention" (*intendere, intentio*).[3] The latter are so broad that their meaning can only be identified through the context; e.g., "intention" can refer to the will's tending to some action for the sake of some goal (intention as understood in ethics), or to a certain mode of formal inherence (*esse intentionale*), or to a form that configures a cognitive power in the likeness of its object[4] – or, as we shall see, to the voluntary directing of attention toward some cognitive object (*intentio* as equivalent to *attentio*). To make matters worse, Aquinas does not treat attention as a separate theme in his cognition theory,[5] so one must glean what one can from brief discussions in other contexts. One particularly useful text in this regard is *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8. There, under the heading of "whether the demons cognize our thoughts,"[6] he raises a version of what I will call the "mind-reading question": namely, if Person A could directly observe the inner workings of Person B's mind, would A be able to see what B is thinking about, that is, read B's mind? This problem, which resonates interestingly with contemporary curiosity about "reading minds" through neuroimaging, offers Aquinas the rare opportunity to isolate the role of attention in cognition. The text reveals the following philosophically interesting positions: (1) The human thinker is capable of "attending" in the sense of voluntarily directing herself dynamically toward an object under different aspects and in varying degrees of intensity; (2) What an act is about is just as much a matter of how one directs one's attention as it is of mental representation, resulting in a concept of intentionality that is broadened beyond a purely static "being about" to an active sense of "tending toward"; (3) Cognition is not only a certain kind of act with a certain metaphysical status, but also a psychological phenomenon with an inner perspective.

This chapter, then, explores Aquinas's treatment of mind-reading in *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, in itself and as an entry point to his views on attention. We will begin with some brief background on *QDM*, q. 16 and his

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[3] See note 62 below.

[4] On forms that can be considered *qua* form and *qua* likeness, see *In MR*, c. 3 (*Editio Leonina*, XLV.2: 115–116, ll. 174–226), and for discussion, Edward M. Macierowski, "Notes to Chapter 3," in Aquinas, *Commentaries on Aristotle's 'On Sense and What is Sensed' and 'On Memory and Recollection,'* trans. Kevin White and Edward M. Macierowski (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 247–252, at 247–248, n. 1.

[5] But for attention (described interchangeably as *attentio* and *intentio*) in connection with prayer, see *In Sent* IV, d. 15, q. 4, a. 2, qcl. 4–5; *ST* II-II, q. 83, a. 13.

[6] For God, angels, or demons reading human minds: *In Sent* II, d. 8, q. 1, a. 5, ad 5; *QDV*, q. 8, a. 13; *ST* I, q. 57, a. 4; *Resp. de 36 art.*, no. 36; *Resp. de 43 art.,* no. 39; *QQ* XII, q. 4, a. 2; *In I Cor*, c. 2, l. 2. For angels reading other angels' minds: *In Sent* II, d. 11, q. 2, a. 3; *QDV*, q. 9, aa. 4–7; *ST* I, q. 107. A related topic is whether the saints are aware of our prayers; see *In Sent* IV, d. 45, q. 3, a. 1.

demonology in general. Turning to the "mind-reading question," we will explore what Aquinas's response reveals about his views on the privacy of thought, the "interior perspective" of subjectivity – and ultimately, his concept of attention.

Two preliminary remarks are required. First, what contemporary philosophers would refer to as "the mind" extends, in Aquinas, across a sprawling three-level cognitive apparatus that includes (a) external senses such as sight and taste, (b) internal senses such as imagination, located in the brain, which cognizes this or that duck by means of "phantasms," that is, the likenesses of individuals, and (c) the immaterial intellect that apprehends, judges, and reasons about duck-nature by means of "intelligible species," that is, the likenesses of essences. Aquinas's term 'mind' (*mens*) is equivalent with the intellect.[7] I will use 'mind' here in the contemporary sense, however, to refer to the entire cognitive apparatus or any of its parts. Because Aquinas holds that the human intellect typically acts in conjunction with the imagination, one could raise interesting questions about how attention factors into this partnership. Nevertheless, in this chapter I will focus only on mind-reading and attention in the realm of the intellect, in accordance with the thematic focus of *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, without discussing the interesting question of attention among nonrational animals.

Second, I will use 'intentionality' to refer to the characteristic of "being about or directed toward something" (whether passively or actively), and 'intentional direction' will describe a specific direction toward a specific object. So for example, thoughts have intentionality; this thought is intentionally directed toward duck-nature.

QDM, q. 16 – Aquinas's treatise on demons

In order to understand the context for Aquinas's discussion of demonic mind-reading, let us make a brief foray into the philosophical Wild West of his demonology. Medieval thinkers considered angels and demons suitable for philosophical inquiry, because they identified them with Aristotle's "separate substances" or subsisting intellects.[8] As scholars now recognize,

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[7] Although Aquinas initially uses '*mens*' to refer to the immaterial powers of intellect and will together (e.g., *QDV*, q. 10, a. 1, ad 2), he later restricts it to the intellect (e.g., *ST* I, q. 79, a. 1, ad 1); see John P. O'Callaghan, "Aquinas's Rejection of Mind, Contra Kenny," *The Thomist* 66 (2002): 15–59.

[8] On the scholastic development of a "natural angelology," see David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), part II; and James Collins, *The Thomistic Philosophy of the Angels* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1947). Aquinas apparently considered the existence of separate substances to be demonstrable; see

the concept of subsisting intellects provided medieval thinkers with a framework for studying the nature of cognition and willing in themselves, in isolation from the complications of embodiment.[9] (For instance, as we will see, the focus on demonic mind-readers enables Aquinas to prescind from the physical obstacles to mind-reading, in order to consider whether thought in itself is essentially private.)

Appropriately for a thinker who would become known as "the Angelic Doctor," Aquinas is more interested in angels than in demons, probably because he does not consider the latter to belong to a distinct kind requiring its own treatment.[10] Demons are merely fallen angels who desired to have supernatural beatitude from their own power rather than as a divine gift, an impossible and irrevocable desire that dooms them to exclusion from beatitude.[11] Thus for Aquinas, anything said about angelic nature – or about the nature of a created separate substance in general – *de facto* applies to demons. (To keep this ontology clear, I will use the term "non-embodied minds" to refer to created separate intellects in general, which can then further be subdivided by choice into "good angels" and "demons.")

QDM, q. 16 thus has a unique status: it is not only the lengthiest but also the only systematic and self-contained treatment of demonology in Aquinas's works.[12] Indeed, it functions as a kind of treatise on the demons appended to the rest of *QDM*,[13] with twelve articles divided into

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Gregory T. Doolan, "Aquinas on the Demonstrability of Angels," in *A Companion to Angels in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Tobias Hoffmann (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 13–44.

[9] See Dominik Perler, "Thought Experiments: The Methodological Function of Angels in Late Medieval Epistemology," in *Angels in Medieval Philosophical Enquiry*, ed. Isabel Iribarren and Martin Lenz (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 143–153; the essays in Hoffmann, *A Companion to Angels*; Harm Goris, "The Angelic Doctor and Angelic Speech: The Development of Thomas Aquinas's Thought of How Angels Communicate," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 11 (2003): 87–105, at 87–88; and Tiziana Suarez-Nani, *Les anges et la philosophie* (Paris: Vrin, 2002).

[10] Demons are rarely discussed in Aquinas scholarship, apart from Tiziana Suarez-Nani and Barbara Faes de Mottoni, "I demoni e l'illusione dei sensi nel XIII secolo: Bonaventura e Tommaso d'Aquino," in *Jakobs Traum*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Horn (St. Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae Verlag, 2002), 77–94; Pasquale Porro, "Il diavolo nella teologia scolastica: Il caso di Tommaso d'Aquino," in *Il diavolo nel Medioevo* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2013), 77–99; and the growing literature on Satan's fall as a test case for medieval theorizing on free choice (see Hoffmann/Furlong's chapter in this volume).

[11] See *QDM*, q. 16, aa. 3–4.

[12] The only comparably extensive treatment, barely half as long, is *In Sent* II, dd. 5–7; cf. *DSS*, c. 20. Elsewhere, only isolated themes emerge, e.g., *ST* I, qq. 63–64 (the fall and punishment of the demons), q. 109 (the demonic hierarchy), and q. 114 (temptation); or *SCG* III, cc. 108–109 (how a pure intellect sins) *SCG* IV, c. 90 (corporeal fire as punishment).

[13] Not only is q. 16 topically self-contained, but as the authors of the critical edition have noted, it also seems insulated from qq. 1–15, lacking cross-references to and from previous questions. I would add another feature indicating a later, unplanned addition: *QDM*, q. 3 contains three

four groups: The metaphysical status of the demons (aa. 1–2); their fall
(aa. 3–5); their cognition (aa. 6–8); and their power over lesser beings
(aa. 9–12). Even so, *QDM*, q. 16 is not comprehensive and presumes con-
siderable background knowledge. For instance, a. 6 begins the discussion
of demonic cognition abruptly by arguing that the demons' natural cogni-
tion as non-embodied minds was not impaired by their fall, clearly assum-
ing that the reader already knows how non-embodied cognition works.

In order to understand Aquinas's discussion of mind-reading in a. 8,
then, let us briefly sketch the theory of non-embodied cognition that
QDM, q. 16 assumes.[14] The basic premise of Aquinas's theory of cognition –
for embodied and non-embodied minds – is that cognition depends on
the assimilation of cognizer and that which is cognized. Non-embodied
minds are assimilated to their objects by means of innate intelligible spe-
cies that reflect God's creative knowledge of created beings. These species
are extraordinarily content-rich: the species of a universal is also the like-
ness of all singulars contained under that universal "as they exist here and
now." For example, using the species 'human', a non-embodied mind not
only understands what it is to be human, but also understands humanity
*as instantiated in all existing singular humans, apprehended as present and
existing here and now*. By an innate species, then, a non-embodied mind
has intellectually the kind of concrete cognition of the individual Socrates
that we humans can have through sensation and imagination.[15]

These ultra-rich species only represent what exists, however, not what is
possible. As a result, non-embodied minds acquire experience over time,
inasmuch as their species constantly change to reflect new singulars that
come into existence:

> Angels are able to cognize singulars by [species representing the natures
> of things], but only insofar as those singulars participate in the natures of
> [=represented by] those species, which does not occur before [the singulars]
> become actual. And therefore immediately when they become actual, they
> are cognized by the angel, just as, conversely, in our case it happens that the

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articles on the devil as the cause of sin (aa. 3–5), which clearly depend on a certain construal of the
demons' ability to know and influence human thoughts – although the latter is not discussed until
q. 16, contrary to Aquinas's usual care for the order of exposition.

[14] This sketch draws from, e.g., *QDV*, qq. 8–9, and *ST* I, qq. 54–58. For a more detailed exposition,
see Collins, *The Thomistic Philosophy of the Angels*, 160–190; Tiziana Suarez-Nani, *Connaissance et
langage des anges selon Thomas d'Aquin et Gilles de Rome* (Paris: Vrin, 2003), 17–75; Harm Goris,
"Angelic Knowledge in Aquinas and Bonaventure," in Hoffmann, *A Companion to Angels*, 149–185.

[15] On non-embodied cognition of singulars, see *ST* I, q. 57, a. 2. For the ability to cognize every-
thing represented in a species all at once, see *QDV*, q. 8, a. 14, ad 4 (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.2: 265, ll.
235–240).

eye cognizes a preexisting stone immediately when it receives the species of the stone.[16]

In other words, these innate species "auto-update" whenever new entities come into existence, constantly maintaining the non-embodied mind's perfect assimilation to reality. The non-embodied mind is, as Suarez-Nani puts it, "an intellectual and intelligible microcosm, like a mirror of the whole of reality."[17] Nevertheless, non-embodied minds are not omniscient. Without supernatural revelation, they cannot know what exceeds the principles of nature (e.g., God's workings through grace, and as we shall see, the thoughts of other minds). And although non-embodied minds are "not ignorant of anything that can be arrived at by natural cognition," they cannot actually think of everything in one act.[18]

The mind-reading question

The inner lives of others are a secret accessible only through their externalized effects – words, facial expressions, and gestures. It is easy to assume that one could see what someone is really thinking, if only one could bypass this "façade" and gain direct access to the mind itself. Along these lines, Gregory the Great attributes the privacy of our thoughts to the obstacle posed by the corruptible body, in a line well-known to Aquinas: "Our hearts cannot be seen by another because they are locked up in clay instead of glass vessels."[19] But is the bodily "outside" really all that stands between us and another mind's thoughts? Suppose that some entity (a mind-observer, or MO) can directly observe someone's mind (let us call him Joe) laid bare behind the external façade. Would an MO be able to *read Joe's mind*, that is, know what Joe is thinking about? In other words, would a mind-observer be a mind-reader? I call this the "mind-reading question."

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[16] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 7, ad 6 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 316, ll. 312–319); see also ad 12 (317: ll. 370–376); *QDV*, q. 8, a. 9, ad 3; *ST* I, q. 56, a. 2, ad 4; *ST* I, q. 58, a. 3, ad 3; *ST* I, q. 64, a. 1, ad 5.

[17] Suarez-Nani, *Connaissance et langage*, 32, my translation.

[18] *QDV*, q. 8, a. 15, ad 2 (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.2: 269, ll. 148–149).

[19] Gregory, *Moralia in Iob*, XVIII, c. xlviii, cited in *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, arg. 1 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 319, ll. 4–6). Elsewhere Aquinas paraphrases from the same chapter of Gregory, e.g., *ST* I, q. 57. a. 4, arg. 1 (*Editio Leonina*, V: 76), corresponding loosely to Gregory's text at (CCSL 143-A: 941; PL 76: 84A–B); and *QDV*, q. 9, a. 4, args. 1–2. Although Aquinas rejects this view in *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, ad 1, he is inexplicably cast as its proponent by, e.g., Suarez-Nani, *Connaissance et langage*, 189; and Bernd Roling, "Angelic Language and Communication," in Hoffmann, *A Companion to Angels*, 223–260, at 236.

Now depending on one's metaphysical commitments, one might have different views of what would be required to observe the mind directly. For instance, if one holds that all cognitive activity is reducible to neurological configurations, then "looking inside" would consist of observing those configurations directly. In contrast, if one holds as Aquinas does that some cognitive activities – that is, the intellect's – are nonphysical, "looking inside" would involve observing both neurological (imaginative) and nonphysical (intellectual) configurations directly.

Regardless of the conditions for mind-observing, the question remains whether observing Joe's cognitive activities would entail seeing what he is thinking. What is at stake here is whether the *psychological* aspects of cognitive activity experienced on the inside (e.g., intentional direction, subjective feel, etc.) are reducible to *metaphysical* properties of a cognitive power that are at least theoretically observable from the outside by an MO. In other words, does thought have an irreducibly private "inside"? (The problem has obvious resonances with contemporary debates about qualia, though space constraints prevent us from discussing them here.)[20]

Aquinas formulates the mind-reading question in *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, as "whether the demons cognize the thoughts of our hearts."[21] But before plunging into his response, let us first clarify the parameters governing his treatment: namely, what a "thought of the heart" is, and what kind of cognition of thoughts would in his view count as genuine mind-reading. In discussions of mind-reading, Aquinas describes what is most private in human psychology as the "thoughts of the heart" (*cogitationes cordis*), or some variation such as "voluntary thoughts" (*cogitationes voluntariae*), "internal thoughts" (*cogitationes internae*), "that which is in the thought or will" (*id quod est in cogitatione vel voluntate*), "everything that is done in the heart of a man" (*omnia que aguntur in corde hominis*), "the hidden

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[20] In fact, Aquinas's negative answer to the mind-reading question essentially corresponds to Thomas Nagel's observation at the end of "What Is It Like To Be A Bat?" *The Philosophical Review* 83 (1974): 435–50, that the problem of qualia is not a mere matter of whether a *physical* description can provide a full description of a subjective phenomenon, but whether *any objective description at all* is up to the task.

[21] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 318, ll. 1–2). Interestingly, in only four texts does Aquinas address the privacy of thoughts specifically in terms of *demonic* knowledge: *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8 (approximately 1270, with q. 16 added perhaps as late as 1272, although the date of the oral *disputatio* is unknown); his opinions on a series of questions raised by two fellow Dominicans, *Resp. de 36 art.*, no. 36, and *Resp. de 43 art.*, no. 39 (both from around 1271); and *QQ* XII, q. 4, a. 2 (disputed sometime between 1270 and 1272). All were written relatively late; in at least three cases, the question was raised by someone other than Aquinas. For the related question of angels "speaking" their thoughts to each other, see Suarez-Nani, *Connaissance et langage*, 185–207 (although I would not agree with her account of privacy at 46–47 and 189); Goris, "The Angelic Doctor and Angelic Speech"; Roling, "Angelic Language," 234–238; and Panaccio, "Angel's Talk."

things of hearts" (*occulta cordium*), "the secrets of the heart" (*secreta cordis*), the "secret will" (*secreta voluntas*) or just simply "thoughts" (*cogitationes*).[22] This language is typical of his sources; in particular, "heart" is a Scriptural term referring to the inner conscience accessible to God alone.[23]

Now the verb "to think" (*cogitare*) in Aquinas broadly refers to "every actual operation of the intellect" – or, with an emphasis on attentiveness, "any actual consideration on the part of the intellect."[24] And the *responsio* of *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, seems to identify "thought" with the act of understanding, describing "the use of the species which is understanding or thinking" and then identifying this same use as "actual thought (*actualis cogitatio*)." But as we will see in the next section, Aquinas's more precise definition of "use" elsewhere, and the ambiguity of "thought" as referring to an act of thinking vs. the content of such an act, resist equating thought straightforwardly with the intellectual act as such, or with any specific cog in the cognitive mechanism.

Thus I propose that given the constraints of space, instead of attempting to define what "a thought" is, we would be better served by investigating *what it means to cognize someone's thought*. Here the language of "heart" can provide a clue, inasmuch as it brings to mind Aquinas's famous "word of the heart" or "interior word" (*verbum cordis, verbum interius*), mentioned indeed by an objector in *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8.[25] For Aquinas, the interior word is the inward expression of the object as I understand it; in fact, to consider something actually just is to "speak interiorly."[26] In *ST* I, q. 93,

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[22] See texts in n. 7 above, as well as *QDM*, q. 16, a. 5, ad 1. A related formulation is *intentio cordis*, a phrase that appears some thirty times in his works, typically to refer to moral intentions and not in connection with mind-reading.

[23] Scriptural sources are: (a) Jer. 17:9–10; (b) 1 Kgs 16:7; (c) Ps. 7:10; (d) I Cor. 2:11. Patristic sources are Gennadius, *De ecclesiasticis dogmatibus*, c. 81 (PL 58: 999A); Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, XII, c. 17, n. 34 (PL 43: 467; CSEL 28-1: 403); Augustine, *De divinatione demonum*, c. 5 (PL 40: 586, CSEL 41: 608); and Augustine, *Retractiones*, II, c. 30 (PL 32: 643; CCSL 57: 114). These are cited throughout the texts in n. 7, as well as *QDM*, q. 3, a. 4, arg. 1.

[24] See *ST* II-II, q. 2, a. 1, and q. 180, a. 3, ad 1, both distinguishing between this broader meaning and a narrower meaning according to which *cogitare* connotes "consideration with inquiry" or "inspecting many things"; and *In Sent* I, d. 3, q. 4, a. 5 where he defines *cogitare* as "considering something according to its parts and properties."

[25] See *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, arg. 11 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 319, ll. 83–89).

[26] *ST* I, q. 107, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, V: 488). The identity of the interior word is controversial; for the standard view of the *verbum mentis* as a mental entity produced as the term of cognition and signified by external words, see John Frederick Peifer, *The Concept in Thomism* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1952), chapter 5; and Perler, *Theorien der Intentionalität*, 89–100. For an identification of the *verbum mentis* with the act of understanding, see John P. O'Callaghan, "Verbum Mentis: Philosophical or Theological Doctrine in Aquinas?" *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 74 (2000): 103–117, and his "More Words on the Verbum: A Response to James Doig," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 77 (2003): 257–268.

a. 7, c. he explicitly connects "thought" to the formation of an interior word: "There cannot be a word in our soul without actual thought (*sine actuali cogitatione*) […] from the knowledge that we have, by thinking (*cogitando*), we form an interior word."

We might reasonably conclude, then, that to cognize Joe's thought is to cognize *what he expresses to himself by his interior word*, that is, the object as it is manifest to him*,* in the way in which he understands it. On this construal, "to cognize Joe's thoughts" is not to cognize *a certain mental entity*, but to cognize *how Joe understands the thing that he is thinking about* or *how the object of thought appears to him.* Although I will continue to translate "*cogitatio*" with the noun "thought", I want to emphasize that cognizing Joe's thought means cognizing "what Joe is thinking about." (To avoid overcomplication, I will treat "thought" as an intellectual phenomenon and thus as being "about" essences, setting aside how Aquinas accounts for thoughts about individuals.)

Now Aquinas explains at the beginning of the *responsio* of *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, that there are two ways in which one could cognize "what someone is thinking": "In one way [Joe's thoughts can be cognized] according as they are seen in themselves (*uidetur in se ipsis*), as some man cognizes his own thoughts; and in another way, according as [the thoughts] are seen by some corporeal sign."[27] This second mode of cognition, by a "corporeal sign," is an indirect cognition of Joe's thoughts, by conjecturing from direct experience of the thought's physiological *effects* without actually directly experiencing Joe's *thoughts themselves* – as when a hunter sees the grass swishing and conjectures that there is a lion hiding there. It may be helpful to think of indirect cognition as merely propositional ("that there is a lion behind the bush"), although Aquinas does not say so himself. It is the first mode of cognition, however, "seeing thoughts in themselves," that is at issue in Aquinas's version of the mind-reading question. The language of "seeing" and the use of the phrase "in itself" indicates a direct, experiential cognition. This is the mode of cognition whereby existing singulars are known as present here and now (as when a hunter sees a lion itself), a mode of cognition that we have by sensing, and that non-embodied minds have by their innate species.[28] We can call this kind of cognition

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[27] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 321, ll. 159–163). This evokes the distinction between objects in themselves vs. as appearing to a cognizer; see Dominik Perler, "What Am I Thinking About? Duns Scotus and Peter Aureol on Intentional Objects," *Vivarium* 32 (1994): 72–89.

[28] See the similar discussion of cognizing things "in themselves" (*in se ipsis*) vs. cognizing them "in their causes" in *QDM*, q. 16, a. 7, and compare the astronomer example in *ST* I, q. 57, a. 2, c.

"direct experience," or "seeing" (a verb Aquinas also uses to emphasize the experiential directness of an intellectual act).

The secrets of the heart: agency and attention

The species-use distinction: what can an MO see?

QDM, q. 16, a. 8's version of the mind-reading question, then, queries whether an MO is able to have a direct experiential cognition of how Joe understands whatever Joe is thinking about. In response, Aquinas will allow the MO an *indirect* cognition of Joe's thoughts by conjecturing from an apparently unlimited *direct experience* of Joe's biological and mental states – but no *direct experience* of Joe's thoughts in themselves, due to the nature of attention.

Now *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, accords to an MO an indirect cognition that actually has nothing to do with mind-observing: namely, the MO cognizes what Joe is thinking indirectly, by conjecturing from observed physiological effects or "signs."[29] In an embodied being, thoughts that give rise to passions reliably trigger certain recognizable biological changes, for example, whitening, blushing, and a quickened pulse (the last example anticipating the lie detector; today Aquinas might have also mentioned the prolific pop-science literature on interpreting body language, eye movements, tone of voice, style of handwriting, etc.). Demons can see these physiological symptoms by their comprehensive, constantly-updating species, and Aquinas speculates that due to their superior intelligence and extensive experience, they are better at conjecturing Joe's thoughts from these external "signs" than human observers are.[30]

But a demon can do better than that: Aquinas takes for granted that non-embodied minds are MOs, that is, they can also *observe Joe's cognitive powers (intellect, imagination, senses) and see how they are configured.*

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[29] See also *In Sent* II, d. 8, q. 1, a. 5, ad 5; *ST* I, q. 57, a. 4. What I am calling "conjecturing" does not contradict Aquinas's view that non-embodied minds cognize non-discursively and without forming propositions. Although non-embodied minds do not construct propositions step by step in order to acquire new knowledge, they do understand propositions by seeing the whole complex at once; see *ST* I, q. 58, a. 4; *QDM*, q. 16, a. 6, ad 1 s. c. According to *QDM*, q. 16, a. 6, c. and ad 1 s. c., demons are liable to judge falsely when they rashly affirm a subject-predicate relationship whose truth is not clearly evident to them. Hence I would agree with Goris, "Angelic Knowledge," 171–172, that angels "do not form propositions," but disagree that their knowledge is "non-propositional."

[30] See *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, ad 13 and ad 14 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 322, ll. 321–329).

Although he does not here explain why,[31] the reason is evident from his earlier claim that the MO can see physiological "signs" of thoughts such as blushing or rapidity of pulse. The MO's innate species encompass all creatures, both material and immaterial,[32] not only according to each creature's nature and individuality, but also according to its changing existing dispositions. Thus in observing Joe, the MO does not merely see how Joe would present himself to a sensory observer, but cognizes Joe through and through, including his intellect and all its acquired intellectual dispositions (species and cognitive habits),[33] and the neurophysical cognitive powers in his brain and their configurations (phantasms).[34] The MO's ability to observe how Joe is cognitively configured – intellectually or neurologically – seems to pose a significant threat to the privacy of Joe's thoughts, because as I have noted before, these cognitive configurations *assimilate Joe to the likeness of the cognized object.* The species 'duck-nature' assimilates Joe's intellect to duck-nature, and the phantasm 'this duck' assimilates Joe's intellect to a particular duck. Thus it seems as though the MO should know what Joe is thinking about simply by observing how he is mentally configured.

Nevertheless, Aquinas insists that the MO's direct observation of Joe's configured cognitive powers is insufficient for seeing Joe's thoughts directly, that is, reading Joe's mind. He appeals to a distinction between two aspects of Joe's thought (*cogitatio*): Joe's species and the use or exercise of

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[31] Instead, Aquinas simply clarifies *what kind* of species are accessible to an MO: namely, the less-powerful species of intellects that are below the MO in the grade of intellects. The species of a higher intellect are too content-rich to be encompassed fully in the MO's species (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 321, ll. 200–214). On the gradation in the scope and number of species in higher and lower minds, see *QDV*, q. 8, a. 9; *ST* I, q. 55, a. 1; and *ST* I, q. 106, a. 1.

[32] See e.g., *ST* I, q. 56, a. 2; for the comprehensiveness of a non-embodied mind's species, see ad 4. On cognizing the human intellect specifically, see *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, ad 5–8 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 322, ll. 271–299) and ad 17 (322: ll. 343–345); and *QDV*, q. 8, a. 13, ad 8 (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.2: 262, l. 153). On cognizing sub-intellectual cognitive powers such as imagination, see *ST* I, q. 57, a. 4, ad 3; and *Resp. de 36 art.*, no. 36.

[33] On intellectual dispositions as included within the cognition of an individual intellect, see *QDV*, q. 8, a. 13, ad 8 (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.2: 262, l. 152); and *QDV*, q. 9, a. 4, ad 11. In *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, ad 12 (and *QDV*, q. 9, a. 4, ad 2), Aquinas argues that from an MO's abilities to cognize the species "it cannot be maintained that a demon could know that some things are in a human memory." This claim is surprising, since intellectual memory just *is* the intellect insofar as it habitually retains the species (cf. *ST* I, q. 79, aa. 6–7). Nevertheless, this is consistent with Aquinas's theory of memory, according to which to remember is to understand something *as something I have previously thought about before*, referring to my prior use of that species in a particular act of thinking. For further discussion, see my "Diachronically Unified Consciousness in Augustine and Aquinas," *Vivarium* 50 (2012): 354–381, at 371–378. So it is not the habitually stored species that is invisible to the MO, but rather *the way it was used* in a previous thought.

[34] See *ST* I, q. 57, a. 4, ad 3 (*Editio Leonina*, V: 76); *Resp de 36 art.*, 36.

those species in acts of understanding. We can call this the "species-use" distinction:

> In thought (*cogitatio*), two are to be noticed: namely, the species itself, and the use of the species, that is, understanding or thinking (*intelligere uel cogitare*). For just as in God alone is there no difference between his form and his very being (*ipsum esse*), so too he is the only one for whom there no difference between the understood species and the very act of understanding (*intelligere*) that is the being of the knower (*esse intelligentem*).[35]

Now "use" is a technical term, referring to the will's act of "applying" or "moving" the other powers of the soul to their operation – the impulse by which the free agent sets herself in motion to act on a choice.[36] Thus the "use of the species" broadly describes a voluntary *impulse*[37] toward a selected cognitive object (duck-nature) by means of a selected species ('duck'). The idea that species, like moral habits, are "used" or "exercised" as principles of cognition is common in Aquinas,[38] fitting into a broader account of habits as equipping an agent for action, such that she can subsequently impel herself "at will" to act.[39] The term "use" can be ambiguous, however; as Stephen Brock points out, it "has two senses, one of which (the primary one) refers to the interior act of the will applying or moving something to the execution of a command, while the other refers to the execution itself, the act carried out by the thing so applied." The reason is that the will's moving a power to act, and the power's being so moved, are one and the same action, which "starts in the agent, but is brought to completion in whatever it is that is acted upon."[40] Thus the "use of the species" can refer to the impulse, originating in the will, to think about duck-nature, or to the intellectual act of thinking about duck-nature in which this impulse concludes. This explains why *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8

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[35] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 321, ll. 196–199). This distinction seems to be operative also in *ST* I, q. 57, a. 4, c. and ad 3; and *QDV*, q. 8, a. 13, ad 2–5 and ad 8. It is applied to phantasms in *Resp. de 36 art.*, no. 36; *QDV*, q. 8, a. 13, ad 6; and (perhaps) *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, arg. 3 and ad 3.

[36] *ST* I-II, q. 16, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, VI: 114).

[37] See Stephen L. Brock, "What is the Use of *usus* in Aquinas' Psychology of Action?" in *Les philosophies morales et politiques au Moyen Âge,* ed. B. Carlos Bazán *et al.*, vol. 2 (Ottawa: Legas, 1995), 654–664, at 659, citing *ST* I-II, q. 16, a. 1, arg. 2, and I, q. 27, a. 4.

[38] For just one example, see *ST* I, q. 84, a. 7, ad 1 (*Editio Leonina*, V: 325).

[39] *In DA*, III, c. 2 (*Editio Leonina*, XLV.1: 209, ll. 25–31); *QDV*, q. 10, a. 2 and q. 20, a. 2; *QDVCom*, q. 1, a. 12, ad 15; *In DA*, II, c. 11 and III, c. 2; *ST* I, q. 79, a. 6 (*Editio Leonina*, V: 270); *ST* I-II, q. 57, a. 1; and *In NE*, VII, l. 3. For the general principle that habits are exercised at will, see *QDVCom*, q. 1, a. 1. c., and the oft-cited Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, ed. F. Stuart Crawford (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953), 438, ll. 26–29 (III, com. 18).

[40] Brock, "What is the Use of *usus*?" 657–658 and 661, respectively.

identifies "using the species" with the intellectual act, although it also goes on to stress that the use of the species "depends on the will" and that "we use the species when we will [to do so]" (as we shall see later).

Since the MO can see Joe's species, any privacy in Joe's thoughts has to be traceable somehow to his use of the species: "The spiritual sight of a good or bad angel can see the spiritual forms of our intellect; but they do not therefore see how we use them in thinking."[41] Now at first, it seems that Aquinas must be arguing that the "use of the species" (the intellect's act of understanding or the will's act of moving it to understand, or both) is invisible *qua metaphysical reality in the mind*. On this account, Joe's thoughts would remain private because the MO would not be able to see *that he is thinking at all*, let alone what he is thinking. But in *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, Aquinas does not actually quite say that the MO cannot see Joe's voluntary acts as metaphysical realities.[42] Instead, he says that demons or angels cannot cognize our thought (*cogitatio*)[43] or how (*qualiter, quomodo*) the species is being used.[44] His concern seems to be whether the MO can "see" *what* Joe is thinking, rather than whether the MO can "see" *that* Joe is thinking.

Could Aquinas intend the species-use distinction, then, to show that Joe's thoughts are private because an MO cannot identify *which species Joe is using in this particular instance*? On this account, the MO would be able to see Joe's acts of thinking and willing, together with the collection of species habitually informing Joe's intellect – but cannot discern whether Joe is is using the species 'duck' or 'dog', and therefore whether Joe is thinking about ducks or dogs. Now at least one text does in fact seem to suggest that there is no observable metaphysical difference between a species that is in use and a species that is not[45] (although Aquinas's distinction between two states of a species in the intellect, the species-in-habit and the species-in-act, suggests otherwise[46]). Nevertheless, in *QDV*, q. 8, a. 13, ad 2, and *ST* I, q. 57, a. 4, ad 2, Aquinas insists that Joe's thoughts remain private *regardless of whether an MO can see which species Joe is using*:

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[41] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, ad 2 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 321, ll. 254–257).

[42] Aquinas's reluctance to settle this point is evident in the restrained formulations in *QDV*, q. 8, a. 13, ad 2 ("it does not follow that…"); and *ibid*., ad 3 ("even if he does…").

[43] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 5, ad 1; *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, ad 5, 9, 12, 16, 17.

[44] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, ad 2 and ad 4; *ST* I, q. 57, a. 4, ad 2.

[45] For a text that seems to support this view, see *QDV*, q. 8, a. 13, ad 3 (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.2: 262, ll. 115–120).

[46] *In DA*, III, c. 2 (*Editio Leonina*, XLV.1: 209, ll. 46–50); *QDV*, q. 8, a. 14 (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.2: 265, ll. 163–266, at 189); and *ST* I, q. 79, a. 6, ad 3 (*Editio Leonina*, V: 271).

> From one species which the intellect has within itself, it goes forth into diverse thoughts, just as by the species of man, one can think various things about man. So even if an angel sees our intellect shaped according to the species of man, it does not follow that he determinately cognizes the thought of the heart.[47]

In *Responsio de 36 articulis* (*Resp. de 36 art.*), no. 36, he says the same about the imagination: A single imaginative configuration in the brain can be used for different thoughts, so in order to see the latter, it is not sufficient to see the former.[48] And as we will see, when Aquinas goes on to explain in *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, why an MO cannot see how we use our species, his argument depends, not on establishing the MO's inability to detect which species Joe is using, but rather on establishing that the direction of attention can only be cognized by the one directing it.

Clearly, then, cognizing Joe's thoughts requires more than merely identifying which species he is using – because *using a species is more than merely activating a mental configuration*. Since, as we will see, the intentional direction of a thought, or "what it is about", is additionally determined by how Joe directs his attention, the privacy of the direction of attention is the ultimate reason for the privacy of his thoughts. Before discussing privacy, however, let us pause to examine more closely how "attending" factors into the use of a species.

Attention and the "use" of the species

Now if "using a species" merely meant "activating that species," the species 'duck' would only make possible one thought (say, about the nature of ducks). Every time Joe uses the species 'duck', he would have that same thought, and if an MO could see that he is using the species 'duck', the MO would know exactly what he is thinking. But as Aquinas recognizes, our duck-related thoughts are much more varied and flexible. Joe might, for instance, be thinking about the role of ducks in the ecosystem, or the possible deliciousness of duck in soup, or the difference between ducks and chickens in terms of how they raise their young.[49] The difference between these different thoughts is not that Joe is using more than one

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[47] *QDV*, q. 8, a. 13, ad 2; *ST* I, q. 57, a. 4, ad 2 (*Editio Leonina*, V: 76); see also *QDV*, q. 8, a. 13, ad 8 (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.2: 262, ll. 152–156).

[48] *Resp. de 36 art.*, no. 36 (*Editio Leonina*, XLII: 346, ll. 599–605). See also *ST* I, q. 57, a. 4, ad 4; and *QDV*, q. 8, a. 13, ad 4.

[49] Since we are here concerned with thoughts about essences, I leave aside the issue of applying the species 'duck' to different *individual ducks* via different phantasms.

species, however. For Aquinas, it is impossible to activate more than one species at a time, because the intellect can only have one actual configuration at a time. One can of course consider complex objects – a comparison, a proposition, a part considered in terms of the whole, or a whole as containing certain parts – but only if the parts are somehow unified under one species.[50]

Rather, the difference between thinking about "the role of ducks in the ecosystem" vs. thinking about "the possible deliciousness of duck in soup" ultimately lies in *how Joe directs his attention*. We can see this in Aquinas's response in *QDV*, q. 8, a. 14 to an objector who had denied the possibility of considering complex objects (arg. 2 s.c.). The objector had cited a well-known Augustinian premise that "an intention is required in order to consider something actually,"[51] concluding that "because intention is a certain motion, it cannot be carried to diverse things at once, because there is only one terminal point for one motion."[52] Interestingly, 'intention' (*intentio*) here clearly means attention – the directing of an intellectual "motion" toward something – rather than a form or configuration.[53] In his response, Aquinas does not reject the objector's description of attention as a "motion" whereby the intellect is "carried" to what it is thinking about, but insists that this intellectual "motion" *can* touch different realities simultaneously:

> Just as a body can touch diverse things with its diverse parts due to its dimensive quantity, so too can a power be applied in diverse ways to diverse things according to diverse relations (*virtus potest diversis applicari secundum diversas comparationes ad diversa*) while it is a power perfected in act, just as fire can simultaneously heat diverse bodies all around [itself]. And so too the intellect perfected by a form can be carried simultaneously to diverse things to which the representation of that form extends (*potest simul ferri in diversa ad quae se extendit repraesentatio illius formae*); and there will be many intentions (*intentiones*) with respect to that to which the intellect is carried, but only one with respect to the unity of intellect and form.[54]

Of course Aquinas is not claiming that a thought about the role of ducks in the ecosystem is composed of many little acts, each intentionally

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[50] See *QQ* VII, q. 1, a. 2; *QDV*, q. 8, a. 14; *SCG* I, c. 55; and *ST* I, q. 85, a. 4.

[51] For Augustine, see *De Trinitate*, XI, especially cc. 3 and 4, on intention as "joining" the inner and outer realms, cited by Aquinas in *In Sent* I, d. 3, q. 4, a. 5, arg. 3 and ad 3; *In Sent* II, d. 8, q. 1, a. 5, ad 6; *QDV*, q. 8, a. 14, arg. 2 s. c. and ad 2 s. c.; *SCG* I, c. 55.

[52] *QDV*, q. 8, a. 14, arg. 2 s. c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.2: 264, ll. 115–120).

[53] See note 62 below.

[54] *QDV*, q. 8, a. 14, ad 2 s. c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.2: 267, ll. 357–370); cf. *SCG* I, c. 55 (*Editio Leonina*, XIII: 157).

directed in a different way. His claim is rather that a single act of intellectual attention can be directed in such a way as to hold together in one glance various parts of what one species represents, e.g., using the single species 'duck' to consider the specific role of ducks in the ecosystem, or the species 'bird', to compare the parenting behaviors of ducks vs. chickens. "The intellect does not merely fix itself (*sistit*) in things, but divides them into many intentions."[55]

What is interesting for our purposes is the distinction drawn here between *what the species as a whole represents*, and *how it is applied* in specific acts of thinking. The species 'duck' opens up an array of intentional possibilities: It can be used to think about, e.g., the role of ducks in the ecosystem or the possible deliciousness of duck in soup.[56] The difference between these different thoughts about duck-nature is just that I am directing my attention differently in each case. To draw an imperfect analogy to vision, the species 'duck' delimits a possible field of intellectual vision, while attention is the act of focusing one's gaze within that field. Just as a single habit of generosity can generate different generous acts toward different recipients, so too a single species 'duck' can generate different thoughts directed toward duck-nature under different aspects. For Aquinas, then, intentionality turns out to be irreducible to mental representation. *What Joe is thinking about* is just as much the result of *how he voluntarily directs his attention in using the species,* as of *what the species is in itself about.*[57] Attention is thus like a flashlight whose direction, intensity, and scope can be controlled. The way one handles the flashlight – how narrowly one concentrates the beam of light, where one shines it – governs how the illuminated object appears. It is not simply a matter of switching the light on and off to let an object appear.

Once we recognize the role of attention in determining "what a thought is about," intentionality shifts from a static property of "being about something," to a dynamic tending toward something, in which one actively directs oneself toward a cognitive goal (or is passively drawn by an object's gravitational pull). This dynamism is underscored by Aquinas's descriptions of attention as "straining toward" or "clinging to" an object

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[55] *QDV*, q. 8, a. 4, ad 5 (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.2: 232, ll. 319–321).

[56] The human agent's ability to use species in different ways seems to be connected also to Aquinas's claim in *QDV*, q. 24, a. 2, that humans can compose their practical judgments by comparing things freely (*collatione*), rather than merely articulating the judgments that come to them naturally (*aestimatione*).

[57] Hayen further suggests that attention also differentiates cognitive stances, e.g., wonder or admiration or confusion (*L'intentionnel*, 219–220); but so far I have found no evidence of this view in Aquinas.

with varying intensity. "We attend much more to things in which we delight; but when attention more strongly clings to one thing, it weakens with respect to other things or is entirely called away from them."[58] Again, "One is more attentive (*attentior*) in the beginning of an operation than as it progresses; for all new things draw our intention toward themselves (*omnia enim nova magis ad se nostram intentionem trahunt*)."[59]

Especially important for understanding attention is the role of the will in directing the intellect to its object: "The true is the good of the intellect: for some intellect is said to be good insofar as it cognizes what is true."[60] As we saw above, it belongs to the will to impel the other powers of the soul into act in service of some good. Implied in the notion of attending, then, is the willed *intention to understand something*, in the perfectly proper sense of willing an end (e.g., understanding ducks) through some means (thinking about their role in the ecosystem). One might even go so far as to say that the will is the source of the dynamism of attending as an intellectual *moving of oneself toward* an intentional object, with all the gravitational language of tending, being pulled, clinging, and straining. It is the will that "orders to an end [...] by inclining to an end (*inclinando in finem*);" indeed "love, in which the act of the will is expressed, is like a certain weight of the soul (*quasi quoddam pondus animae*)."[61]

The curious intertwining of will and intellect in directing attention explains the ambiguity in the terms 'intention' and 'intend' (*intentio, intendere*). These terms in Aquinas, when applied to mental acts, typically refer to the will's act of tending toward some end by some means, yet are also regularly used for an intellectual attention (sometimes also called *attentio*).[62] In *ST* I-II, q. 12, a. 1, c. Aquinas explains:

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[58] *ST* I-II, q. 33, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, VI: 233).

[59] *In Sent* IV, d. 49, q. 3, a. 2, ad 3 (ed. Vivès, XI: 511); see also *QDV*, q. 12, a. 4, ad 3; *QDV*, q. 13, a. 3; *QDV*, q. 24, a. 12; *SCG* III, c. 136; *QQ* VII, q. 6, a. 1, ad 2; *QQ* IX, q. 4, a. 2; *ST* I-II, q. 181, a. 2, ad 2; on acting "melius uel debilius" in general see *QDM*, q. 6 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 148, ll. 316–17). Note also the link between inattention and *akrasia* in *ST* I-II, q. 77, a. 2.

[60] *SCG* I, c. 71 (*Editio Leonina*, XIII: 206): "Verum est bonum intellectus: ex hoc enim aliquis intellectus dicitur bonus quod verum cognoscit."

[61] *In Sent* II, d. 41, q. 1, a. 1 (ed. Mandonnet/Moos, II: 1035).

[62] In the realm of cognition and action, *intentio* can refer to acts, or to mental configurations such as species or phantasms. See the five meanings that Ludwig Schütz idenfies in *Thomas-Lexikon*, 2nd ed. (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1895), s. v. "intentio," pp. 419–422. For just a few cases in which *attentio* is used interchangeably with *intentio*, see *ST* I-II, q. 33, a. 3 and *In Sent* IV, d. 49, q. 3, a. 2, ad 3; *In NE*, X, l. 13, n. 2 (*Editio Leonina*, XLVII.2: 594, ll. 22–23); *ST* I-II, q. 37, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, VI: 253); *ST* II-II, q. 181, a. 2, ad 2. For texts in which *intentio* is clearly used in the sense of *attentio*, see *QDV*, q. 13, a. 3; *SCG* I, c. 55 and III, c. 119; *ST* I-II, q. 77, a. 1; I–II, q. 12, a. 2, ad 1; II–II, q. 173, a. 3, arg. 2; II-II, q. 83, a. 14, ad 3, etc.

> 'Intention', as its very name sounds, signifies "to tend toward something (*in aliquid tendere*)." Now both the act of the mover and the motion of the movable, tend toward something. But the "tending toward something" of the motion of the movable, proceeds from the action of the mover. For this reason, intention first and principally pertains to that which moves toward an end, which is why we say that an architect, or every ruler, moves by his command others to that which he himself intends. But the will moves all the other powers of the soul [i.e., including the intellect] to their end, as was said above. For this reason it is clear that intention is properly an act of the will.[63]

Here, while insisting that *intentio* belongs primarily to the will, he also describes a "tending toward something" in the moved motion of the intellect or other powers of the soul that *results from its being moved by the motion of the will*.[64] What we see here, then, is that the will's intending of an end through a means, and the intellect's attending to an object under some aspect, are not so far apart as one might initially think. In fact, the directing of the latter *just is* the motion that is imparted to it by the former.

   Thus while "attending" connotes an intellectual directedness, attention begins in the will's intention to understand. In intending to understand ducks better by thinking about their role in the ecosystem, Joe is directing his will toward a specific intentional object. "In order for someone to consider actually according to the species that exist habitually in the intellect, there is required an intention of the will […]. By the sole intention of the appetite are the species reduced to perfect act."[65] When the will moves the intellect to act, "using the species," it communicates its own intentional direction to the intellectual act, where this direction manifests as attention to the role of ducks in the ecosystem. In other words, it is the will's intentional direction that sets the direction for intellectual attention: "Whatever is directed or inclined by something toward something, is inclined toward that which is intended by that which inclines or directs; as the arrow is directed toward the very mark that the archer intends."[66]

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[63] *ST* I-II, q. 12, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, VI: 94). In the much earlier parallel text, *In Sent* II, d. 38, q. 1, a. 3, however, *intentio* is attributed to the intellect only insofar as the intellect supplies a precondition for the will's intending (i.e., knowledge of the end), without making any concessions for the act of intellect *qua* moved by the will.

[64] See *ST* II-II, q. 180, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, X: 424). In *QDV*, q. 21, a. 3, ad 5 (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.3: 599, ll. 122–124), we find an interesting use of *intentio* as "the act of the mind," where "mind" refers to both intellect and will together; see note 7 above).

[65] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 11, ad 4 and ad 5 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 331, ll. 259–261, 273–274).

[66] *QDV*, q. 22, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.3: 613, ll. 179–182).

The unity of this event should be emphasized; it is not as though the will and intellect are autonomous mini-agents, with an "event" in the will causing a separate "event" in the intellect. Rather, there is a single impulse toward some cognitive object under some aspect, which begins in the will and concludes in the intellect.

We can now see that if "use" is an impulse-into-act that belongs to the will *qua* mover and to some power of the soul *qua* moved, then "directing one's attention" precisely describes the use of the intellectual power. To use the species 'duck' is not merely to activate that species, but more precisely to *direct attention by means of that species to specific features within the scope of intelligible reality made accessible by the species*.[67] The will does not simply trigger the intellect's act, but moves it to act in a specific direction that is realized in the intellect as the thought's intentional direction. To attend in this active sense, then, is to think willingly about this or that, to "use the species" for a particular thought-purpose. It is only because of the will's involvement, not merely in *activating* the intellect but in *directing it intentionally*, that humans can freely apply their mental configurations in different ways, engaging in different thoughts about the same object under different aspects. "Every thought (*cogitatio*) depends on the will."[68]

Since the voluntariness of thought is the source of its privacy (as we will see in the next section), we should note that for Aquinas, voluntary acts include those to which we are stimulated but *could* have willed to avoid: There is a certain deliberate agency even in simply allowing ourselves to be moved. Thus although the subsequent analysis will focus on cases in which Joe deliberately selects what he is going to think about, it also applies equally to cases in which he allows his attention to be captured by some object. In both cases attention remains an active *directing of oneself toward the object*; the difference is merely in whether Joe selects the intentional object himself or merely acquiesces to whatever catches his attention. In both cases, his attending is voluntary (and thus private), because it remains under his control.[69] In contrast, non-voluntary mental acts do not seem to be private: In *ST* I, q. 57,

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[67] *In Sent* II, d. 28, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3. For *dirigere* applied to intellectual attention, see, e.g., *In Sent* III, d. 21, q. 2, a. 2, ad 1; *QDV*, q. 22, a. 1; *SCG* III, c. 21; *SCG* I, c. 55; *SCG* III, c. 119; *ST* I-II, q. 12, a. 2, ad 1.

[68] *QQ* XII, q. 4, a. 2 (*Editio Leonina*, XXV.2: 404, ll. 16–17).

[69] Conversely, inattentive acts do not proceed from will. See *SCG* III, c. 2 (*Editio Leonina*, XIV: 6); *ST* I-II, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3; *ST* I-II, q. 18, a. 9.

a. 4, ad 3, Aquinas seems to admit the possibility that an MO observing the configuration of an animal imagination, or of the human imagination operating entirely outside the direction of reason (as in the case of insanity), would know, though presumably not experience, exactly what that being is thinking.

The inward mover argument and the privacy of the direction of attention

We can now turn to Aquinas's argument in *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, for the privacy of our thoughts. In an earlier section, I argued that this text does not try to ground the privacy of our thought on the "invisibility" of some cognitive component *qua* metaphysical accident of the mind. Given that 'use of the species' refers to the volitional/intellectual directing of one's attention, we will see that the argument relies on construing the direction of attention as a *psychological* dimension of thought that can be experienced *only in the act of directing it*.

> [A] But with respect to use, it must be considered that the use of intelligible species, which is actual thought (*actualis cogitatio*), depends on the will: for we use the species habitually existing in us when we will; wherefore in III *De anima* the Commentator [Averroes] says that a habit is that which one uses when he wills. But the motion of the human will depends on the highest in the order of things, which is the highest good, which also Plato and Aristotle identify as the noblest cause: for the will does not have some particular good as its proper object, but the universal good, whose root is the highest good. Therefore, that which falls under the order of a higher cause cannot be cognized by a lower cause, but only by the higher cause that moves and by that which is moved – just as if some citizen is subordinate to a prefect as to a lower cause, and to the king as to the supreme cause, the prefect is not able to have cognition concerning the citizen if the king immediately orders [the citizen] in some matter. Only the king and the citizen who is moved by the order of the king know it. [B] Whence because the will cannot be inwardly moved by anything other than God, to whose order the motion of the will – and consequently the motion of voluntary thought – is immediately subordinate, it cannot be cognized either by the demons, or by anyone else, except only by God alone and by the man who is willing and thinking.[70]

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[70] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 321, ll. 215–241).

At first, the following argument seems to be implied:

(1) Someone can see what proceeds from Joe's will only if he moves Joe's will inwardly.
(2) Joe's thoughts proceed from Joe's will (because to think is to use a species, which use depends on the will, as we saw above).
(3) An MO cannot move Joe's will inwardly (only God and Joe can do this[71]).
(4) Therefore, the MO cannot see Joe's thoughts.

But why should it be the case, *per* (1), that an MO must move Joe's will in order to see what proceeds from the will? A possible justification could be extracted from the [A] section, namely, "That which falls under the order of a higher cause can only be cognized" by that cause and that which it orders. But Aquinas cannot mean that *no one* can know a motion at all except the mover and the moved; a geologist can study erosion even though she is neither a wave nor a rock. Similarly, even if the prefect is not actively involved in communicating the king's order to the citizen, there seems to be no reason why he would be *constitutively unable to witness* the king giving the order to the citizen. Nor can the point be that *God's* direct action on a creature is invisible to a third party,[72] because the argument is supposed to explain why an MO cannot "see" *Joe's* acts of willing. And in any case, as I have argued in the last two sections, the central issue in *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, is not whether the MO can see *that* Joe is using a given species or any species at all – but rather *how* Joe is using his species, or in other words, *how Joe is directing his attention.* After all, to see Joe's thoughts is to see "what he is thinking about," that is, the intentional direction that is imparted to his intellect by his will.

Now if to use a species is to direct one's attention within the intelligible framework made accessible by the species, we could interpret Aquinas's reasoning in *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, quite differently, as relying on the claim that the *activity itself* of directing the intellect to some intentional object yields a certain kind of experiential knowledge of the act that is only available to the one who is actively directing attention from the inside, so to speak. On this interpretation, the argument of the above text could be spelled out in what I will call "the inward mover argument":[73]

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[71] See *ST* I, q. 105, a. 4.

[72] In *ST* I, q. 57, a. 5, c. (*Editio Leonina*, V: 78), Aquinas does say that the angels cannot cognize the "mysteries of grace." But God's moving of the human will in *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8 is his granting to the will its natural motion; it is not a supernatural motion of grace.

[73] A similar argument appears in *QQ* XII, q. 4, a. 2, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXV.2: 404–405, ll. 13–18); and *ST* I, q. 111, a. 2, ad 2. This argument should not be confused with a separate argument that also appeals to the will on behalf of the privacy of thoughts, but for a different reason: namely, the MO cannot cognize Joe's thoughts because insofar as they are caused by the will, they cannot be

(1')   Someone can see (in the sense of directly experience) the direction of the will's impulse only if he is the one impelling it.

(2')   An MO cannot impel Joe's will inwardly.

(3')   Therefore, the MO cannot see (in the sense of directly experience), the direction of Joe's will's impulse.

(4')   But the direction of Joe's intellectual attention just *is* the direction of the will's impulse as imparted to the intellect.

(5')   Therefore the MO cannot see the direction of Joe's attention either.

(6')   But to see the direction of Joe's attention is just to see what he is thinking about.

(7')   Therefore, the MO cannot see what Joe is thinking about – which is to say that the MO cannot see Joe's thought.

The inward mover argument allows us to make sense of Aquinas's peculiar claim that a cause's ordering of an effect can only be cognized by the cause and the effect: he simply means that for rational beings *the very act of impelling something toward a goal* makes available a "from the inside" experience of one's own agency, yielding a privileged perspective the direction of the impulse. In other words, the inward mover argument invokes an inner psychological dimension of a voluntary act, that is, the experience of one's own agency (whether the agent is Joe or God).

   The link between an interior experience of agency and the privacy of thought becomes clear in the comparison that Aquinas twice draws between mind-reading and self-awareness in *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8. As we saw, he begins the *responsio* of *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, by explaining that to "see thoughts in themselves (*in se ipsis*)," would be to see them "as some man cognizes his own thoughts."[74] And in responding to arg. 7, Aquinas denies that the MO's superior knowledge of the nature of the human soul implies that the MO knows us in *all* respects better than we know ourselves:

> There are two kinds of cognition of the soul: one whereby one cognizes what the soul is, distinguishing it from everything else; and in this way the demon, who beholds the soul itself in itself, cognizes the soul better […]. But the other cognition of the soul is that whereby one cognizes that it exists. And in this way one cognizes the soul in perceiving it to exist from

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reduced to natural causes, whereas non-embodied intelligible species only reflect natural causes (this seems to be the main argument against mind-reading in *QDV*, q. 8, a. 13, although elements of the inward mover argument also seem to be present). As *QQ* XII, q. 4, a. 2 makes clear, this is a different line of reasoning from the inward mover argument that we find here in *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, and I will not discuss it here.

[74] Collins is the only commentator who has noticed Aquinas's linking of privacy to self-awareness; see *The Thomistic Philosophy of the Angels*, 233.

its acts, in which it is experienced. And to this way of cognizing, there belongs the cognition by which we cognize ourselves to be thinking about something.[75]

To "see" what Joe is thinking about, then, would be to share in the kind of self-awareness that Aquinas typically describes as "cognizing that one's soul exists by its acts" (as opposed to "cognizing what the soul is"[76]). As I have argued elsewhere but can here only briefly summarize,[77] this self-awareness is the experience of one's own agency in the very exercise of that agency. Because of the inherent reflexivity of the incorporeal intellect and will, Aquinas holds that to "understand something" is to "understand oneself to be understanding," which is to "understand oneself to exist."[78] In acting, one experiences oneself *as an agent acting*, or more specifically, *as the one who is thinking or willing some extramental object*.

Now if self-awareness is an experience of one's own agency-in-acting, then we can see why Aquinas would insist that the MO has to be inwardly impelling Joe to think in order to experience Joe's thoughts as Joe does himself. For Joe to cognize himself to be cognizing the role of ducks in the ecosystem, is for him to experience the internal impulse whereby he actively moves himself to think about this, *as an impelling that he himself performs*. Elsewhere Aquinas explains: "Those things that exist in the soul according to their essence are cognized by an experiential cognition, insofar as a man experiences intrinsic principles [of act] by [their] acts, just as in willing we perceive the will (*voluntatem percipimus volendo*), and perceive life in the vital operations."[79] Also, "one cognizes the inclination that one has to some acts […] by the fact that one reflects upon one's acts while one cognizes oneself to be operating […]. One perceives the act of the will by the overflowing (*redundantiam*) of the will's motion in the intellect, from the fact that [will and intellect] are conjoined in the one essence of the soul."[80] Since the MO can never move Joe's will from the inside, it can never have the experience of the impulse "from the inside" that Joe has as the impelling agent. The difference between an "inside" and "outside" perspective of agency is especially stressed in *In I Cor*, c. 2, l. 2:

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[75] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, ad 7 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 322, ll. 283–294).

[76] *QDV*, q. 10, a. 8; *SCG* III, c. 46; *ST* I, q. 87, a. 1.

[77] See the in-depth analysis in my *Aquinas on Human Self-Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), chapters 3, 4, and 6.

[78] *QDV*, q. 10, a. 8.   [79] *ST* I-II, q. 112, a. 5, ad 1.

[80] *In Sent* III, d. 23, q. 1, a. 2, c. and ad 3 (ed. Mandonnet/Moos, III: 701–704); see also *QDV*, q. 22, a. 12, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.3: 642, ll. 98–115); *ST* I, q. 87, a. 4; and *QDM*, q. 6, ad 18.

> But neither a good nor a bad angel can know the things hidden in the heart of a man, except insofar as they are manifested by some effects. The reason for this can be taken from the words of the apostle, who says for that reason that the spirit of man [previously identified as the human intellect] cognizes what is in the heart of man because it is in the man itself. But neither a good nor a bad angel can slip into the human mind so as to be in the human heart itself, operating interiorly (*angelus autem, neque bonus neque malus, illabitur menti humanae, ut in ipso corde hominis sit et intrinsecus operetur*) – rather, this is proper to God alone. Whence God alone is aware of the secrets of the human heart.[81]

Here again, the criterion for "beholding the thoughts of the heart" is to be active "on the inside" of the heart (here, standing for the human intellect). This activity on the inside generates experience of the activity from an inside perspective, which is a special *way* of knowing a thought – the only way in which a thought can be known "as it is in the intellect."[82]

Now it would be tempting to conclude that the privacy of thought, on this account, consists simply in the fact that the MO cannot adopt Joe's first-personal identity. To share Joe's experience of thinking would be to be aware of "myself as the one who is thinking about the role of ducks in the ecosystem", where "myself" refers to Joe. Since the MO is *not* Joe, it can never have this thought in the way that Joe does. (the MO could of course initiate its own thought about ducks, but that would not be the same as "seeing" Joe's thought.) Nevertheless, the privacy of our thoughts vanishes almost to nothing if it consists merely in the MO's inability to predicate "I" of the same agent that Joe does. Moreover, God presumably cannot say "I" about our thoughts either, yet Aquinas repeatedly states that God can see the secret thoughts of the heart.

Rather, I would argue that the privacy of our thoughts is rooted in the premise that agency carries with it, in its very performance, a experiential cognition *of the intentional direction of the act,* which cannot be had by any other way than by acting. The direction of attention can only be known in the act of directing it. That is why it can only be grasped from the inside, that is, by the one who is directing attention. In other words, the MO is unable to "see Joe's thought in the way in which Joe does," because *the way that Joe is aware of his thought about ducks is by thinking it,* that is, by voluntarily attending to ducks. Joe's exercising of agency in thinking just *is* his directing of his own attention. The MO, however, cannot exercise agency

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[81] *In I Cor*, c. 2, l. 2 (ed. Marietti, 252, §104).
[82] *ST* I, q. 57, a. 4, c. (*Editio Leonina*, V: 76). See also *In Sent* II, d. 8, q. 1, a. 5, ad 7 (ed. Mandonnet/Moos, II: 216).

as an internal principle of Joe's acts of thinking. To do so, the MO would have to move the will without being the highest good, which is impossible, since the will is free. Consequently, the MO cannot have the kind of knowledge of Joe's thought that is had by the exercising of that thought.

The situation with intentional direction, I think, is therefore analogous to other instances of "aiming." One cannot *fix one's aim on something* without cognizing *where one is aiming*:

> Something can be ordered or directed to something else as to an end in two ways: in one way, by itself, like a human who directs himself to the place where he tends; in another way, by another, like an arrow that is directed to a determinate place by the archer. Now only those entities that cognize the end can be directed by themselves to that end; for the one directing has knowledge of that to which he directs.[83]

It would be strange to ask a baseball pitcher how he knows where he is aiming his pitch, or an archer how he knows where he is aiming the arrow. Insofar as I aim a baseball, an arrow, or my intellectual attention, I know where I am aiming, because to aim *just is* to set the direction of aim, deliberately and consciously. It makes no sense to say "I am aiming the arrow, but I do not know what I am aiming at." Of course, perhaps I do not know "what I am aiming at" in the sense that I am ignorant of the nature of the object at which I am aiming, e.g., whether it is a duck or a cow – or in the sense that there is a discrepancy between my aim and the arrow's ability actually to reach the point at which I am aiming. But it is not possible to aim the arrow without knowing *the subjective direction in which I am aiming*; otherwise, I would not be aiming at all, but merely waving the arrow around randomly. The direction of aim is something I necessarily experience in directing myself. Similarly, the direction of attention is something I necessarily experience by actively attending.

But *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8 seems to be making an even stronger claim: not only is the MO unable to have the *kind of knowledge* of the direction of Joe's attention that Joe has, but as a result it also cannot cognize the *content of Joe's thought precisely and certainly* by mind-observation. The reason is that aiming is a conscious, deliberate act involving an intentional trajectory from the agent to the object, such that *only* the one aiming can know exactly what he is aiming at. Here the analogy of a "sight line" can be helpful: one can only see where a sight line leads by standing in exactly the position from which it begins. (In fact, Aquinas compares intentional acts to trajectories in *QDV*, q. 8, a. 14, when he says that it is impossible

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[83]   *QDV*, q. 22, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.3: 613, ll. 142–150).

for an intellect to think about many things at once, "just as it is impossible for one line to terminate at many points."[84]) But even a sight line is not as private as the intentional direction of thought, because thought includes *aspect*. For example, when someone is peering through fixed binoculars at a look-out point, I know exactly what view he has. And perhaps by measuring the contraction and position of his eyeball, I could even identify precisely what speck of the visual field he is focusing on. But I cannot know *how* he is attending or *under what aspect* he is attending to it; e.g., whether it is the color or the shape or the size of the speck, or its usefulness or strangeness or beauty that catches his attention. Similarly for Aquinas, the *precise direction in which Joe is attending* is not accessible through mind-observation. Even if an MO managed to conjecture correctly precisely what Joe is thinking about, it could not know with certainty that the conjecture was successful. Joe could of course communicate his thoughts to an MO or anyone else, but Joe's reliability would be in question, as with any case of human communication. For Aquinas, then, presumably the only way for the MO to know Joe's thoughts precisely and certainly would be through divine revelation (as Aquinas says sometimes occurs on a need-to-know basis, either to an angel who needs to assist Joe in some endeavor, or to a saint to whom Joe is praying). This revelation would yield certain knowledge of Joe's thoughts, e.g., "that Joe is thinking about the deliciousness of ducks." But the *experience* of sourcehood in thinking would remain incommunicable, so that this knowledge could only be had indirectly and propositionally.[85]

Conclusion

In *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, then, Aquinas answers the mind-reading question in the negative: observing Joe's mind is insufficient for reading Joe's mind, that is, seeing what he is thinking. His answer relies on distinguishing two aspects of cognitive acts: namely, their metaphysical status and their psychological features such as directedness and perspective. This distinction

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[84] *QDV*, q. 8, a. 14, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXII.2: 264, ll. 175–178). Aquinas was certainly also familiar with Augustine's idea of attention as a line joining subject and object; see note 51.

[85] I therefore have to disagree with Brock, who denies that "others' immanent acts […] can be 'seen' only 'from the inside'" on the grounds that otherwise one would likewise be incapable of seeing "the *natures* of other things, which are also inside them" ("Intentional Being, Natural Being, and the First-Person Perspective in Thomas Aquinas," *The Thomist* 77 (2013): 103–133, at 130). The latter does not follow, first, since a sensible substance is not related to its nature as physiological symptoms are related to thoughts; and second, since as we have seen, for Aquinas, "seeing" a thought specifically implies being "on the psychological inside" of an act, whereas there is no psychological "inside" in, say, a tree.

accords to an MO an apparently unlimited access to Joe's mental states *qua* metaphysical realities, while preventing the MO from seeing how Joe is directing his attention. Thus the MO may be able to conjecture "that Joe is thinking about what ducks might taste like," by noticing, e.g., the increased neural activity in areas of the brain associated with taste, the phantasm of a duck or of soup in the organ of imagination, and the species "duck-nature" forming Joe's intellect (if the MO can identify which species is used). Nevertheless, the MO cannot know how nearly this conjecture approximates the actual trajectory of Joe's thought, since there are many different ways in which Joe might direct his attention in connection with the taste of duck. Moreover, the MO's cognition of the approximate direction of Joe's attention remains merely propositional, lacking the character and certitude of direct vision. Even though the MO can see "inside" Joe's mind, the MO can never be on the inside of Joe's thinking, so as to "see" with Joe what Joe is thinking about. This means that for a demonic or angelic observer, human motivations would be the most inexplicable feature of human psychology. Because an MO cannot experience Joe's moving himself to act from the inside, it can know what kinds of stimuli result in Joe's actions, but not *why* they motivate him.

Interestingly, cognitive science today employs essentially the same strategy that Aquinas assigns to an MO for acquiring indirect propositional knowledge of human thoughts: namely, observed patterns of brain activity are correlated with what humans report of their own thoughts, in order to build increasingly reliable links between thought-content and certain patterns of neurological activity. But on the account sketched above, cognitive scientists cannot be said to have achieved the status of mind-observers – not only because Aquinas holds that the realm of the mental extends beyond the activity of the brain, but also because of current technological limitations in observing brain activity itself. Whereas Aquinas's MO directly observes the changing neurological configurations that are the principle for imagining, sensing, or biological desiring, contemporary techniques are more limited: For instance, functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) enables one to observe directly only the *effects* of neurological activity (e.g., changes in intracranial blood flow), and even electroencephalography (EEG) enables one to observe directly only a *partial aspect* of neurological activity, that is, the electrical activity of neurons.

Through the case study of mind-reading, I hope to have shown that Aquinas not only recognizes attention as a mental phenomenon, but assigns it a defining role in his account of intentionality. Under this account, the intentional direction of the act (what it is about) cannot be

simply read off from the species but is ultimately determined by the direction in which the agent chooses to aim his attention. The salient feature of attention under this construal, then, is its dynamism: attention is an active *impulse toward* an intelligible object under a certain aspect, which the will communicates to the intellect in moving the intellect to act. Although we speak of the "directing of attention," it would be better to speak in terms of verbs like attending, tending, intending, directing, rather than nouns like attention – as in fact Aquinas does in *QDM*, q. 16, a. 8, when he speaks of "the use of the species, which is to understand (*intelligere*) or to think (*cogitare*)." To attend *is* to direct oneself cognitively. Far from being the mere activation of a mental likeness, thinking is for Aquinas a performance, an active and voluntary straining toward the intended object with a dynamism that is evident only on the inaccessible, psychological "inside" of thought.

Evil as privation: the Neoplatonic background to Aquinas's De malo, 1

Fran O'Rourke

Malum est priuatio boni. The definition of evil proposed by St. Thomas in *De malo* is far from original; it was already well developed by both St. Augustine (354–430) and Pseudo-Dionysius (c. 500). Although Aquinas expounded the definition largely through Aristotelian categories, these two figures commanded for him the highest possible theological authority. Augustine was the greatest thinker of Christian antiquity; differing greatly in philosophical approach and personality, he exerted profound influence on Aquinas. Less well known was the enigmatic Dionysius; writing in the late fifth or early sixth century, he enjoyed quasi-apostolic authority throughout the entire Middle Ages by successfully assuming the pseudonymous identity of the first bishop of Athens and most famous disciple of St. Paul. St. Thomas wrote a detailed commentary on Dionysius's treatise *On the Divine Names* and cited him over 1,200 times throughout his writings, second only in frequency to Aristotle.

Aquinas was unaware that, for his treatment of evil, Dionysius had drawn extensively on the Neoplatonist author Proclus (412–485). The treatise *De malorum subsistentia* (*DMS*) was the most systematic and comprehensive treatment of evil until then by any author, and it became one of the most important, though hidden and indirect, sources for Aquinas's

theory of evil. Proclus's treatise aptly illustrates the maxim "*habent sua fata libelli.*" It was lost sometime during the Middle Ages, but not before William of Moerbeke had completed a translation in 1280. The translation, or – perhaps better – William's word for word conversion, made it possible, in conjunction with Isaac Sébastocrator's 11th-century compilation, to reconstruct the original text with credible accuracy. When we recall that Moerbeke's 1262 translation of Proclus's *Elements of Theology* revealed to Aquinas the true background of the *Liber de causis*, correcting the assumption that it was Aristotle's theological tract, it is tantalizing to imagine his reaction had he lived barely six more years to read his confrère's rendition of *DMS*.

Proclus's main target was Plotinus (204–270), whose theory of evil he judged inconsistent. Through the vagaries of intellectual transmission, Plotinus's thought provided a separate and equally important undercurrent in Aquinas's approach to evil, since he, along with Porphyry, furnished Augustine with the kernel of his theory of evil. After Scripture, Augustine was Aquinas's most explicit authority in *QDM*, q. 1. Unaware of the common remote conceptual ancestry involved, Aquinas attributes the definition of evil as *priuatio boni* to both Augustine and Dionysius, citing neither Plotinus nor Proclus, both of whom championed different versions of the doctrine. An adequate account of the sources for Aquinas's theory of evil must therefore take into account both Plotinus and Proclus, as also certainly Plato, who first raised the nature of evil and whose views influenced subsequent interpretations. Proclus in particular, applying many of Aristotle's insights, clarified and modified much of what he found in Plato and Plotinus. Aristotle's categorical differences, the distinction between primary and secondary causes, and his doctrine of privation were integral to Aquinas's definition of *malum* as *priuatio boni*.

The present chapter concentrates on the sources for the definition of evil as *priuatio boni* as discussed in the first three articles of *QDM*, q. 1. The key concept of *priuatio* provides a leitmotif for these articles. Evil is not a positive reality, but a deprivation of an autonomously existing individual; it survives in dependence upon the good. Evil does not have independent, but "parasitic" existence, an ontological status aptly conveyed by the Greek word *parhupostasis*. The term, first employed by Iamblichus, was exploited by Proclus in *DMS* and adopted by Dionysius. Unfortunately the quasi-existential sense of the term was not adequately conveyed by Sarracenus in his translation of Dionysius (where it is rendered *praeter existentiam*), so its subtlety was lost to Aquinas. It was from his reading of

Plato's *Theaetetus* that Proclus derived the term *parhupostasis*, and it is with Plato that our investigation begins.

The Platonist background to the question of evil

Proclus recommended that investigation into evil should start with Plato, thus kindling a light to illumine further inquiry. Aside from its obvious merit, the advice is especially relevant to our inquiry. Plato's scant remarks on evil inspired Plotinus, whose detailed treatise in turn influenced both Augustine and Proclus.

Plato nowhere developed a complete theory of evil, offering only disparate remarks in various dialogues. Discussion among his followers centered primarily on passages from the *Theaetetus*, *Republic*, and *Timaeus*. What seems like a passing comment by Socrates at *Theaetetus* 176a5–8 provoked great debate:

> It is impossible, Theodorus, that evil things will cease to exist, for it is necessary that the good always has its subcontrary (*hupenantion*); nor have they any place in the divine world, but by necessity they revolve about our mortal nature and this place.

This brief passage was seminal for the philosophical discussion of evil and inspired such Neoplatonist doctrines as: evil is necessary and will always exist; there is no evil in the divine world; evil is a subcontrary rather than the contrary of the good. Plato's use of *hupenantion* rather than *enantion* is highly significant, anticipating Proclus's solution that evil has not a positive existence (*hupostasis*), but dependent parasitic existence (*parhupostasis*).

A number of passages in the *Republic* also gave rise to discussion. There Plato emphasizes that since God is the cause only of what is good and is not responsible for evil, we must seek other causes.[1] Plato suggests that while God is the unique cause of good things, evils arise from a variety of (accidental) causes. Proclus would later argue that evil results not from the intrinsic finality proper to genuine purposive causality, but from a multiplicity of indeterminate causes. The unicity of causation of the Good is a central doctrine of the *Republic*: the Good is the origin of all being, value and truth, and the goal of all human desire. In the myth of Er, Plato emphasizes that souls are individually responsible.[2] Proclus echoes Plato's verdict: "Souls suffer what they ought to suffer when they have chosen

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[1] *Republic*, II, 379c2–7.   [2] *Republic*, X, 617e4–5.

badly."[3] In making souls responsible, Proclus rejected Plotinus's later view that matter is to blame for evil.[4]

The primacy and beneficence of the Good, depicted in the *Republic*, is paralleled at the lower level of nature by the goodwill of the Demiurge, described in the *Timaeus*. The craftsman who shaped the world wished it to be as perfect as possible.[5] The demiurge is not always successful in imposing order upon matter; the physical world is liable to imperfection and the way is open to evil. One of the most disputed questions in the Neoplatonist debate is the role of matter in the occurrence of evil. According to Plotinus, matter as entirely deprived of determination is the essence and source of evil. Augustine, Proclus, and Dionysius strongly disagreed.

Aristotelian elements in the theory of evil

While Aristotle does not offer an extensive treatment of the question, his remarks are significant; his logic and subtle metaphysical distinctions furnish Aquinas with crucial elements. Aristotle states in the *Categories*: "The contrary of good must be evil, and this can be proved by induction[…]. Generally speaking, it is true that the contrary of evil is good." Thus, whereas in the *Theaetetus* Plato states that evil necessarily exists as the contrary of good, its existence for Aristotle is not an *a priori* necessity but must be ascertained by observation: "It does not of necessity follow that, if one of the contraries exists, then the other too must also exist."[6] Aristotle thus contradicts the Platonic position on the necessity of evil as the obverse of goodness. Plotinus would adopt the Platonist position, asserting evil to be the really existent contrary of goodness. Proclus regarded Plotinus's explanation of evil as contradictory and dualistic and reverted to Aristotle. Augustine too, committed to the Christian doctrine of creation, rejected Plotinus's view, which seemed to him dangerously similar to the Gnostic position he had abandoned.

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[3] *DMS*, 33, 22. References are to page and line numbers of the Latin translation by William of Moerbeke in Proclus, *Tria opuscula (De Providentia, Libertate, Malo). Latine Guilelmo de Moerbeka vertente et Graece ex Isaacii Sebastocratoris aliorumque scriptis collecta*, ed. Helmut Boese (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1960). The English translation is Proclus, *On the Existence of Evils*, trans. Jan Opsomer and Carlos Steel (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

[4] See Jan Opsomer, "Proclus vs Plotinus on Matter (De mal. subs. 30–7)," *Phronesis* 46 (2001): 154–188; and Denis O'Brien, "La matière chez Plotin: son origine, sa nature," *Phronesis* 44 (1999): 45–71.

[5] *Timaeus*, 29e1–3, 30a2–3.

[6] *Categories*, X, 13b36–14a7.

As Aquinas notes in *QDM*, Aristotle's terminology is not entirely consistent, as he sometimes interchanges the terms contrariety and privation.[7] Perhaps the distinction was not of great importance in the context of the *Categories*, where evil is simply defined as the contrary of good; in the *Metaphysics*, however, Aristotle distinguished clearly between privation (*sterēsis*) and contrariety (*enantiōsis*). In so doing he laid the groundwork for the traditional definition of evil.[8] Plotinus did not recognize the difference, maintaining that privation – identical with contrariety – is in some way a reality; in this he was motivated by *Theaetetus* 176a. For Aristotle privation (*sterēsis*) as such has no subsistence (*hupostasis*), but always requires a subject.

Although he had no great interest in the question, Aristotle effectively formulated what would become the classical doctrine of evil when he distinguished between the different kinds of privation. Noting that privation has as many meanings as the negative prefix "*a-*", he distinguishes three senses. Of interest to us is the difference he makes between the absence in a thing of a perfection that is not proper to its nature, and the absence in an individual of a perfection which of its nature it should possess. Thus we cannot say that a vegetable is blind because it is "deprived" of sight, whereas a man is blind because he lacks a perfection that by nature he ought to possess.[9] Aquinas writes in similar vein when he points out in *ST* I, q. 48, a. 3, that the simple absence or negation of a good (*remotio boni negative accepta*) is not an evil, as that would mean non-existing beings are evil, or that something is bad because it lacks the good enjoyed by another individual. Only the *privative* absence of a good (*remotio boni privative accepta*) is evil, such as blindness; significantly Aquinas applies Aristotle's example of blindness as privation to illustrate the status of evil.[10]

Aristotle's categories and his concept of privation are central to Aquinas's opening statement of *QDM*, q. 1: "Evil can be understood in one way as the subject that is evil, and in this sense it is something real (*et hoc aliquid est*); in another sense it can be understood as the [quality of] evil itself: this is not a real entity, but the privation of a particular good."[11] Aquinas illustrates the distinction with the parallel distinction, in the case

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[7] See *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 5.
[8] See *Metaphysics*, V, 10, 1018a20–21; X, 4, 1055a33–1055b29. See also Aquinas, *In Meta*, V l. 12 (ed. Marietti, 247, §922).
[9] *Metaphysics*, V, 22, 1022b22–1023a6.
[10] *ST* I, q. 48, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, IV: 493). See below footnote 74, and Charles Journet, *The Meaning of Evil* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1963), 42.
[11] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 5, ll. 165–169).

of white, between the thing that is white (the subject that is white), and the whiteness itself (the accidental mode that inheres in it).

Among Aristotle's great philosophical discoveries were the allied concepts of potency and privation, both of which were indispensable in order to explain change. Aristotle's main criticism of Parmenides was the failure to recognize the reality of potency. In *Physics* I, 9, he criticized Plato for failing to distinguish between matter and privation, a further distinction needed to explain change. Matter, according to Aristotle, is accidentally nonbeing and in a sense proximate to substance, whereas privation in no way is.[12] The Aristotelian notion of privation as entirely deprived of existence is fundamental to Aquinas's explanation of evil. In his commentary on *On the Divine Names* he notes that Dionysius follows Aristotle.[13]

Plotinus's theory of evil

Although Aquinas was not familiar with Plotinus's writings on evil, they were of immense background importance for his own theory. Plotinus introduced to Augustine the concepts of privation and nonbeing, and it was to refute Plotinus that Proclus wrote *DMS*, the work plagiarized by Dionysius. According to Plotinus, the entire universe emanates, whether directly or indirectly, from the One, the supreme first principle which is superabundantly good and absolutely perfect in itself. Finite beings come into existence through a descending hierarchy of causes, their perfection diminishing as they recede from their transcendent source. Since matter is the final product or most remote emanation, it is entirely deprived of perfection, and it is at this level that Plotinus locates evil. As the final echo of the One, matter is for Plotinus equivalent to nonbeing (not to be confused with non-existence, as we shall see), and identical with evil itself.

At the start of his treatise "On what evils are and where they come from," Plotinus remarks: "[I]f, because opposites are known by one and the same kind of knowledge and evil is contrary (*enantion*) to good, the knowledge of good will also be knowledge of evil."[14] Plotinus accepts Aristotle's definition of good as that to which all things aspire, and evil its contrary: evil is a lapse or falling away from the good (*elleipsis*).[15] Goodness is equated with form (*eidos*), evil with the total lack of any (*sterēsis*). Their

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[12] *Physics*, 192a4–6.
[13] *DDN*, IV, l. 21 (ed. Marietti, 207, §559).
[14] *Enneads*, I.8 [51], 1, 13–16, in Plotinus, *Enneads I–VI*, trans. A. H. Armstrong, 7 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966–1993), I: 279, with minor alteration.
[15] *Enneads*, III, 2 [47], 5, 26.

views diverge deeply, however, on the meaning of privation and contrary (*enantion*), and on the precise nature of the opposition between good and evil. Whereas Aristotle distinguished between matter and privation, Plotinus regarded them as identical: matter is devoid of all determination, and being identical with privation, constitutes evil itself.

Plotinus was familiar with the explanation of evil in Aristotelian terms as the privation of a form which ought to be present, which would eventually be adopted as the traditional orthodox theory. One of the objections he formulates against his own view is stated in Aristotelian terms: "But the nature which is opposed to all form is privation; but privation is always in something else and has no existence by itself. So if evil consists in privation, it will exist in the thing deprived of form and have no independent existence."[16] Plotinus hopes to overcome the logic of the objection and persists in identifying evil with matter as totally deprived of perfection. Identifying matter with privation, he adapts Aristotelian concepts to formulate a radically anti-Aristotelian theory of evil. Rejecting the distinction between matter and privation, he also rejects Aristotle's analysis of contrariety.

Two doctrinal shifts were indispensable for Plotinus's definition of evil: his rejection of Aristotle's distinction between matter and privation, and his idiosyncratic, novel, application of the concept of nonbeing proposed in Plato's *Sophist*.[17] To define evil as nonbeing, Plotinus creatively reinterprets the definition of nonbeing as otherness, proposed by Plato to resolve the impasse resulting from Parmenides's radical opposition between "being" and "non-being". The Stranger asserts that there is a form that is, of "what-is-not".[18] This form of nonbeing is that part of otherness which, although it participates in being, is nevertheless opposed to being (since it is not identical with it). Defining evil as nonbeing, Plotinus draws on this Platonist concept of a "*form* of nonbeing" ("the form that turns out to be, of what is not"), as distinct from what "*is not in any way at all*".[19] This paradoxical opposition is crucial to his position; while the Stranger has defined

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[16] *Enneads*, I.8 [51], 11, 1–5.

[17] Denis O'Brien, "Plotinus on the Making of Matter, Part III: The Essential Background," *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 6 (2012): 27–80, at 31, n. 10 offers the text and translation: "*Sophist* 258e2–3: τὸ πρὸς τὸ ὂν ἑκάστου μόριον αὐτῆς [*sc.* τῆς θατέρου φύσεως] ἀντιτιθέμενον ἐτολμήσαμεν εἰπεῖν ὡς αὐτὸ τοῦτό ἐστιν ὄντως τὸ μὴ ὄν. Literally: 'Of that part of the nature of the other (τὸ [...] μόριον αὐτῆς [sc. τῆς θατέρου φύσεως]) that is opposed to the being of each thing (πρὸς τὸ ὂν ἑκάστου [...] ἀντιτιθέμενον), we dared to say (ἐτολμήσαμεν εἰπεῖν) that just that (ὡς αὐτὸ τοῦτό) *is really* (ἐστιν ὄντως) what *is not* (τὸ μὴ ὄν).'"

[18] *Sophist* 258d6: "τὸ εἶδος ὃ τυγχάνει ὂν τοῦ μὴ ὄντος."

[19] *Sophist* 237b7–8: "τὸ μηδαμῶς ὄν."

nonbeing as a "part of otherness", the difference is that whereas in the *Sophist* the opposition was to "the being of each thing", in the *Enneads* the opposition is to "the beings properly so-called", that is, the "forms" (*logoi*).[20]

Thus while it is defined as nonbeing, evil is not the absolute nonbeing of nothingness, but the opposite of goodness, insofar as it is identified as matter deprived of all determination. Plotinus begins by defining evil simply as the absence of form, but concludes that it is complete poverty.[21] This leads him to define evil, identified with matter, as complete deficiency.[22] Matter is sheer lack; it is not just the absence of a particular quality or perfection, but is in itself total deficiency. For Plotinus matter is evil itself (*autokakon*) because it is deprived of all determination and perfection.[23] Not only is it indeterminate, but it is also of its nature incapable of receiving any positive determination, for were it to do so it would no longer be matter. What we perceive as order is merely a reflection of the Forms; the cosmos, as Plotinus starkly puts it, is no more than a "corpse adorned."[24] However, while Plotinus describes matter as nonbeing, he does not mean that is non-existent. Were it so, the world we see around us could not exist. Matter, though evil and deprived of all good, nonetheless exists.

Plotinus identifies matter with privation and thus with evil itself. Both Proclus and Augustine disagree profoundly with Plotinus's definition of matter as evil. Since matter derives from the One, however indirectly and remotely, to identify it as evil contravenes the axiomatic truth that the Good causes only what is good. It is this contradiction that Proclus criticizes in *DMS* when he argues that matter is necessary for the universe. In *De natura boni* (*DNB*) Augustine recalls the fundamental principle that every nature is good in itself and stresses that matter, "which the ancients called hyle," is not evil.[25]

Augustine on evil

There are three plausible explanations for Augustine's definition of evil as privation. The first and simplest – though least likely, for the simple reason that Augustine does not say so – is that he read the summary of

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[20] O'Brien, "Plotinus on the Making of Matter," 32, n. 13: "*Enn.* II 4 [12] 16.1–3: …μορίῳ ἑτερότητος ἀντιταττομένῳ πρὸς τὰ ὄντα κυρίως, ἃ δὴ λόγοι [*sc.* ἡ ὕλη ταὐτόν ἐστι]. 'Matter is the same (ἡ ὕλη ταὐτόν ἐστι, taken over from the words preceding) as a part of otherness (μορίῳ ἑτερότητος) set in opposition (ἀντιταττομένῳ) to the beings properly so-called (πρὸς τὰ ὄντα κυρίως), that are none other than *logoi* (ἃ δὴ λόγοι).'"

[21] See *Enneads*, I.8 [51], 3, 12–16.   [22] See *Enneads*, I.8 [51], 5, 5–12.
[23] See *Enneads*, I.8 [51], 8, 42.   [24] See *Enneads*, II.4 [12], 5, 18.   [25] *DNB*, c. 18.

Aristotle's theory given by Plotinus.[26] The passage contains all the elements of Augustine's position; one need look no further. Plotinus provided an excellent summary of Aristotle's theory for the purpose of rejecting that view. He even refers to the "privation of a form which ought to be present."[27] It is unlikely, however, that these lines were Augustine's main inspiration.[28] A second, more convincing, motivation for Augustine's identification of evil with nonbeing is the doctrine of creation. Since everything is caused to exist by an infinitely good and powerful God, evil cannot be an independent reality in itself, but must be explained in some sense as nonbeing or absence of perfection: "For you [God] evil does not exist at all."[29] The third explanation, generally favored by scholars, is that Augustine developed his philosophical explanation of evil through his engagement with Plotinus; this doubtless occurred in conjunction with the impetus received from Scripture, to which he was attracted partly under Neoplatonist influence.

Confessions VII, where Augustine reflects on evil and concludes it is nonbeing, is written in the mood of the *libri Platonicorum* that were decisive in his rejection of Manicheism.[30] Augustine does not explicitly state that he read the *Enneads* but many undeniable references have been identified in his writings. His main influence was Plotinus, although it must be pointed out that Augustine silently disengaged from the essentials of Plotinus's theory of evil. Plotinus understood nonbeing and privation in his own idiosyncratic sense which Augustine was obliged to repudiate, although employing the same terminology. Adopting the terminology of nonbeing and privation, he greatly transformed its meaning. Although Aquinas was probably familiar with most of Augustine's extant writings and could therefore draw on his wider teaching, he cites only occasional phrases from six of Augustine's important works in *QDM*, q. 1.

De moribus Manichaeorum (388)

Shortly after his conversion Augustine wrote a personal defence of Christianity entitled *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*, accompanied

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[26] *Enneads*, I.8 [51], 11, 1–5, cited above.

[27] *Enneads*, I.8 [51], 11, 10–11 (Armstrong, I: 307). Armstrong notes: "This is the Aristotelian doctrine, implying the distinction between matter and privation which forms the basis of Aristotle's criticism of the Platonic doctrine of matter (*Physics* I.9) and which is attacked by Plotinus in II.4.14." (306–307, n. 1).

[28] See Robert J. O'Connell, *Images of Conversion in St. Augustine's 'Confessions'* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), 108.

[29] *Confessions*, VII, c. xiii, 19.   [30] *Confessions*, VII, c. ix, 13.

by a suitably contrasting sequel, *On the Morals of the Manicheans*, intended as a refutation of the Manichean view of evil. As a disillusioned ex-Manichean Augustine was master of the attack. Aquinas refers to *De moribus Manichaeorum* (*DMM*) in *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, obj. 6. He does not mention Augustine's refutation, but cites only an incidental remark to support the objection he wishes to formulate. According to Augustine, once something exists, it never entirely recedes into nonbeing.[31] The objection argues that light does not fully cease when the sun no longer illumines the air, but remains in the subject as an imperfect disposition (*dispositio imperfecta*): darkness is thus a reality (*aliquid*) contrary to light, and not just a privation; similarly evil, the objection concludes, is not merely the absence or privation of good, but its contrary. In his *De anima* Aristotle also asserted that darkness is the contrary of light, and he is quoted by Aquinas in the previous objection, together with Dionysius and Damascene who compare evil with darkness.[32] In reply to both objections claiming evil is an existent entity contrary to goodness and not its privation, Aquinas simply affirms that darkness is the privation of light and not its contrary: when darkness prevails, no light is present, only the potency for light. He makes the interesting observation that such potency is not darkness as such, but the subject of darkness. Aquinas explains that Aristotle frequently uses the term "contrary" to describe privation, since privation is in a sense a contrary, and that the first contrariety is between the possession of a form and its privation.

The following statement from *DMM* is highly relevant to our theme, although it is not cited by Aquinas: "Evil is that which falls away from essence and tends to non-existence."[33] It should therefore follow logically that the ultimate evil would be non-existence, that is, nothing. Evil is parasitic on being. Since each thing insofar as it exists is good, this means that nothing is absolutely evil; conversely what is absolutely evil is non-existent. Evil is always opposed to the nature of a subject of which it is an evil. Nature, insofar as it is a nature, is no evil.

It is surprising that Aquinas makes no reference to Augustine's argumentation in *DMM* that evil is not itself a nature, but what is contrary to nature. Augustine offers a wonderfully didactic refutation of the Manichees which aptly illustrates the naïveté of their argument. Arguing against those who maintain evil is not a substance, Manichaeus states that if he places a scorpion in such a person's hand, the objector will

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[31] See *DMM*, II, c. 2, 7.   [32] *De anima*, II, 418b18.   [33] *DMM*, II, c. 2, 2 (PL 32: 1346).

immediately retract his hand and reject the scorpion as evil; but since the scorpion is clearly a substance, evil must be a substance. Augustine replies that what is poisonous for humans is good for the scorpion. The scorpion is good in itself, but injurious to man. Evil is not in itself a nature, but what is in some respect against a particular nature. If the poison were intrinsically or substantially evil, it would inevitably destroy the scorpion, whereas removal will in fact cause its death. The scorpion's good is our evil: its evil is to be deprived of what is evil for us. Evil is not itself a nature, but what is inimical, harmful or against nature.[34] Evil, according to Augustine, is *amissio*, *corruptio*, *defectus*, *privatio boni*.

The example of the scorpion illustrates two themes that are central to *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, where Aquinas argues that evil can exist only within goodness. Firstly, that what is good in one respect may be evil in another. More fundamentally it illustrates that evil needs a subject in which to reside. If the subject upon which it depends is abolished, so also is the defect. There is no blindness without eyes, lameness without legs, or illness without a living organism.

De libero arbitrio (388–395)

De libero arbitrio (*DLA*) was also written by Augustine as a response to the Manichean teaching which attributed moral evil to matter, thereby relieving humans of blame, but also depriving them of free will. Defending freedom of the will Augustine makes humans responsible for moral evil or sin and the ensuing evil of punishment. The work takes the form of a dialogue between Augustine and Evodius, who begins by asking whether God is not the cause of evil. Distinguishing between the evil that people do, and the evil they suffer (sometimes legitimately and justly, in which case God may be regarded as the cause of punishment), Augustine replies that God can in no way be considered the cause of the evil done by humans. He makes the important distinction: "We believe that everything that exists is from God and yet that God is not the cause of sins."[35] This treatise by Augustine provided Aquinas with the fundamental distinction between moral evil and punishment, and motivated his conviction that sin is the source of all human evil. It is therefore of considerable importance for *QDM*, q. 1, aa. 4–5. Question 1 contains five references to *DLA*: two refer to the distinction between sin and punishment and three to man's responsibility for sin and the just punishments that follow.

[34] See *DMM,* II, c. 7, 11.   [35] *DLA*, I, ii, 4 (CCSL 29: 213).

This work may also have inspired St. Thomas's third reason in *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, for rejecting evil as a positive reality. Aquinas asserts what amounts to an ontological axiom based on the general observation that each thing naturally desires to preserve its being: "Being itself especially has the nature of desirable."[36] Similar statements are to be found in Aristotle and Boethius, but the motif is presented with enthusiasm by Augustine in *DLA*, with many references to the soul's wanting-to-be (*esse velle*). It is for Augustine a natural evidence that all rational beings seek complete and perfect fulfillment; this equates, he suggests, to the desire for completeness of existence. It is translated into a sheer love of existence, which finds its highest expression in the desire for the highest eternal good. Paradoxically it is verified even in immoral behavior, which desires the attainment of a real existing good. It is proven, Augustine also suggests, even in the case of the suicidal person, who believes that in dying he will attain complete peaceful serenity or rest (*quies*), free from the inconstancies of ephemeral realities. The suicidal person mistakes the wish for nothingness with the desire for peace, which is the plenitude of being.[37] Augustine's viewpoint is well expressed: "Consider what a great good is existence itself (*ipsum esse*), inasmuch as both the unhappy and the happy want it."[38] He urges: "If you want to avoid unhappiness, love the will to exist which is in you."[39] The notion of *esse velle* is the ontological root of the related motif *naturale desiderium quietis*.[40]

Besides Augustine, Aquinas could also find this doctrine in Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* with its repeated insistence that things naturally strive to preserve their existence and shun death and destruction.[41] Aristotle likewise declares that "being is better than non-being."[42] From the general observation that all things seek to preserve themselves in being, avoiding what is destructive of their existence, Aquinas concludes the first article of *QDM*, q. 1, with what amounts to a fundamental law: "existence, insofar as it is desirable, is good."[43] Since by definition evil is universally opposed to goodness, it is, he states, equally opposed to existence and cannot be counted among those things that are.

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[36] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 6, ll. 228–229).
[37] *DLA*, III, viii, 23 (CCSL 29: 289).   [38] *DLA*, III, vii, 20 (CCSL 29: 287).
[39] *DLA*, III, vii, 21 (CCSL 29: 287). See also *DCD*, XI, c. 27 (CCSL 48: 346).
[40] See Emilie Zum Brunn, *St. Augustine: Being and Nothingness* (New York: Paragon House, 1988), 40.
[41] *De consolatione philosophiae*, III, pr. 11. See *QDV*, q. 21, a. 2; *ST* I, q. 5, a 2, ad 4; *ST* I, q. 5, a. 2, ad 3; *CT*, c. 116; *SCG* III, c. 3, arg. 7.
[42] *De generatione et corruptione*, II, 336b28–29: "βέλτιον δὲ τὸ εἶναι ἢ τὸ μὴ εἶναι."
[43] *QDM*, q. 1. a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 6, ll. 232–233).

De natura boni (405)

QDM, q. 1 contains six allusions to *DNB*, a short work written as a refutation of the dualist doctrine of the Manicheans that there exists an absolute principle of evil opposed to goodness. Augustine's starting point is that God, the highest good, is the origin of all things, spiritual and corporeal; as omnipotent he has created all things from what is absolutely non-existent.[44] He alone is immutable; creatures are changeable. Since all things have been created by God, they are necessarily good, including the lowest grades of reality. The core doctrine to refute the Manichees, he emphasizes, is that all nature, every spirit and every body, is naturally good. "Every nature, insofar as it is a nature, is good."[45] Augustine explains: "No nature, therefore, as far as it is nature, is evil; but to each nature there is no evil except to be diminished in respect of good. But if by being diminished it should be consumed so that there is no good, no nature would be left."[46] Thus if, *per impossibile*, something were to become totally evil, it would cease to exist. Augustine's point is that nothing can ever be entirely deprived of all goodness: so long as its nature remains, it retains its intrinsic goodness. Evil requires a positively existing subject in which to reside.

The characteristics of goodness with which God has endowed creatures, according to Augustine, are measure, form, and order (*modus*, *species*, *ordo*); these determine the degree of a creature's goodness. They are the basic or general goods (*generalia bona*) found in things made by God, who is himself beyond measure, form, and order. When these generic goods are great, creatures are great; when small, creatures are small; when they are absent, there is no good. These qualities determine a thing's nature and Augustine affirms: "Therefore all nature is good."[47] According to Augustine, "if all natures should guard their own proper measure and form and order, there would be no evil."[48] Having listed the qualities of goodness Augustine defines evil as "nothing else than the corruption, either of the measure, or the form, or the order, that belong to nature."[49] No being, however, can be entirely corrupted; so long as it retains its nature, to that degree it is good.[50]

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[44] *DNB*, c. 1.   [45] *DNB*, c. 1 (CSEL 25.2: 855).

[46] *DNB*, c. 17 (CSEL 25.2: 861–862).   [47] *DNB*, c. 3 (CSEL 25.2: 857).

[48] *DNB*, c. 37 (CSEL 25.2: 873).   [49] *DNB*, c. 4 (CSEL 25.2: 857).

[50] See *DNB*, c. 4, 9, 10.

Augustine rejects the fundamental Manichean doctrine that there are two natures, "the one good, which they call God, the other evil, which God did not make."[51] The Manichees' sharp separation of matter and spirit had appealed to the young Augustine.[52] In this work he decries the "criminal blasphemy" by which they attribute to the supreme evil nature, the Prince of Darkness, such good things as life, virtue, measure, form and order, and to God, the supreme good, such evil things as death, deformity and perversity.[53] This offends the fundamental axiom that all things are created by a supremely powerful and benevolent divine cause. He likewise rejects the Manichean view of matter as evil, and their introduction of Hyle, a separate god that shapes corporeal beings: "nobody can form and create corporeal beings but God alone."[54] According to Augustine, matter is the passive principle, formless and without quality: it has a capacity for forms, which is in itself a good. "And because every good is from God, no one ought to doubt that even matter has its existence from God alone."[55]

Enchiridion (c. 421)

With seven references, the work most frequently cited by Aquinas in *QDM*, q. 1, aa. 1–3, was the *ENC*, a "handbook" of Christian doctrine. Augustine presents his understanding of evil against the background of the goodness of creation. The universe contains evil; Augustine observes that "faith may refer to evil things as well as to good, since we believe in both the good and evil."[56] In a single paragraph Augustine outlines his core theory of evil.[57] Firstly he situates the phenomenon of evil within the overall framework of the universe: "In this universe, even what is called evil, when it is rightly ordered and kept in its place, commends the good more eminently, since good things yield greater pleasure and praise when compared to the bad things." Secondly he notes the profound reason for the very possibility of evil: God would not allow evil "unless in his omnipotence and goodness, as the Supreme Good, he is able to bring forth good out of evil." Thirdly he offers a definition: "What, after all, is anything we call evil except the privation of good?"[58] This he explains by

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[51] *DNB*, c. 41 (CSEL 25.2: 874).
[52] See *Confessions*, V, c. 10, 18; *Confessions*, IV, c. 3, 4; and *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 140, 9–10.
[53] See *DNB*, c. 41.   [54] *DNB*, c. 18 (CSEL 25.2: 862).
[55] *DNB*, c. 18 (CSEL 25.2: 862).
[56] *ENC*, II, 8 (CCSL 46: 51). Translations of the *ENC* are from Augustine, *Confessions and Enchiridion*, trans. Albert C. Outler (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955).
[57] *ENC*, III, 11 (CCSL 46: 53–54).   [58] *ENC*, III, 11 (CCSL 46: 53).

analogy with sickness, which is the privation of health and not something that exists in itself. When a person is cured, the disease does not migrate to another body: it ceases to exist. Evil, like disease, is not a substance. Sickness is an accidental defect of the body which, as substance, is good. Defects of the soul are likewise accidents, privations of goods that belongs naturally to the soul.[59]

At the start of chapter 4 of the *ENC* Augustine elaborates upon the metaphysical foundation of evil, repeating the axiomatic position: all of nature is good, since the creator of all nature is supremely good.[60] Since by contrast nature is not supremely and immutably good, goodness in creatures can be diminished and increased. Evil is precisely the diminution of goodness in creatures; yet no matter how much it is diminished, something of its original nature persists as long as it exists.[61] If a creature were fully deprived of its nature, it would be annihilated. Insofar as a being is corrupted, it is evil; it cannot, however, be completely or exhaustively corrupted; otherwise it would cease to exist. And insofar as it exists it is good; evil therefore exists only as the diminution of goodness in a substance which is fundamentally good.[62]

Evil is therefore for Augustine parasitic upon goodness, relying for its reality upon an existing good in which it inheres and from which it draws whatever efficacy it enjoys. Without goodness there is no evil. Evil abides within an existing reality; its essence is deficiency, that is, the lack or absence of the measure of goodness by which the individual fails to attain the perfection proper to its nature. Nothing could exist were it entirely bereft of goodness; it would be an impossible contradiction. Insofar as something exists and has a nature, it is good; insofar as it is deprived of its proper perfection, it is evil. Evil thus inheres relatively as a negation within goodness.

Although Augustine has apparently clarified the manner in which the various categories are predicated, he draws the strange conclusion that "in these two contraries we call evil and good, the rule of the logicians fails to apply."[63] His reference is to the principle of noncontradiction which, he states, applies in almost all disjunctions, including dark and bright, sweet and sour, black and white: "Nevertheless, while no one maintains that good and evil are not contraries, they can not only coexist, but the

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[59] See *ENC*, III, 11 (CCSL 46: 54).   [60] See *ENC*, IV, 12 (CCSL 46: 54).

[61] See *ENC*, IV, 12 (CCSL 46: 54).

[62] See *ENC*, IV, 12 (CCSL 46: 54); IV, 13 (CCSL 46: 54–55); IV, 13 (CCSL 46: 55).

[63] *ENC*, IV, 14 (CCSL 46: 55).

evil cannot exist at all without the good, or in a thing that is not a good. On the other hand, the good can exist without evil."[64] Since evil depends upon goodness, we must accept that these contraries coexist. It is surprising that Augustine, who himself relates his enthusiasm upon reading the *Categories*, did not recall Aristotle's statement that while a substance has no contrary, it can receive contraries.[65]

Aquinas's only challenge to Augustine is to the latter's rejection of the principle of contradiction which, he claims – if strictly observed – would require the mutual exclusion of good and evil in the same subject.[66] In an objection formulated against his own position that evil exists only in the good, Aquinas cites Augustine's *ENC* that, insofar as what is evil exists in goodness (*in hoc quod malum est in bono*), the principle of noncontradiction does not hold. The rule only fails, so goes the objection, if evil exists in the good as its opposite. But this is impossible, since opposites contradict each other; evil, therefore, cannot be in the good. The objection in fact reverses Augustine's argument. Whereas Augustine had maintained that the principle of noncontradiction does not hold in the case of evil in a good subject, the objection appeals to the principle to conclude that evil cannot exist in the good; Augustine had argued that evil does exist in the good, with the inevitable conclusion that the principle of noncontradiction cannot hold in this case. In his reply to the objection Aquinas declares that the principle does not really break down if evil exists in the good, since the good in which it resides is not contrary to it. He concedes that in a general way the principle *appears* to fail because, absolutely speaking, good and evil are contraries.

Augustine displays faulty logic when he states that the principle of noncontradiction does not hold in the case of good and evil coexisting in the same subject, on the grounds that opposites are mutually exclusive. Aquinas points out that the evil in question does not oppose the good subject in which it resides, but only the particular good that it suppresses. Thus blindness does not oppose the eye, but sight, of which it is the privation.

In objection 14 of *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, Aquinas again makes reference to a minor phrase from Augustine's *ENC*. Augustine states that "evil, rightly ordered and kept in its place (*malum suo loco positum*), commends the good more eminently."[67] Anything that occupies a place, so goes the objection, must be a real entity. It has to be noted, again, that Aquinas

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[64] *ENC*, IV, 14 (CCSL 46: 55).   [65] See *Confessions*, IV, c. xvi, 28.
[66] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, ad 5; *ENC*, IV, 14.   [67] *Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 4, ll. 93–94.

does not draw on the very rich text of Augustine but only cites an incidental remark. In his reply Aquinas states that evil is situated in a place because of the goodness it retains; he agrees with Augustine's view that by its opposition evil "commends" the good, that is, it enhances by contrast the appeal of the good.

A recurring refrain throughout Augustine's writings is that insofar as something is, or has, a nature, it is good; insofar as its nature is corrupted, it is bad.[68] Since the devil also has a nature, even he too is good.[69] Augustine explains, "For no nature, in so far as it is a nature, is bad, but rather good, without which good no evil is able to exist – for no flaw is able to exist except in some nature, whereas there can exist without flaw a nature never flawed or one healed."[70] To the degree that a being is free of corruption, and its nature complete, it is good; in the measure that its nature is deficient, it is evil.[71]

Summarizing Augustine's role in *QDM*, we may conclude that Aquinas draws deeply on Augustine's theory of evil but complements it in important respects. Augustine's philosophy, rooted in the immediacy of personal experience and expressed with compelling rhetoric, occasionally lacks methodic rigor. Aquinas adds refined reflection to Augustine's effusive style, assisted by the analytical methods of Aristotle and the insights of Dionysius to compensate for Augustine's conceptual limitations. An example is Augustine's imprecise definition of evil. Evil is the privation of a good, or the absence of being: the good is that which is, evil is that which is not. One may not, however, define every absence as bad, so, for example, the absence of wings on humans is not evil. Aquinas adds the crucial clarification that evil is the absence of a due good (*priuatio boni debiti*): the absence of a good which should exist but does not, the lack of some power or quality which a thing by its nature ought to possess. This precision was not new; Anselm had previously introduced the term *debita* into his definition, although there is no evidence that Aquinas was influenced in this regard.[72] An alternative wording is the Scholastic formulation: *negatio perfectionis debitae*. The distinction between simple absence and privation is well expressed by Aquinas in other works, including the

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[68] *DLA*, III, xiii, 36 (CCSL 29: 297). See also *DNB*, cc. 1, 17, 19.
[69] See *Opus imperfectum contra Iulianum* VI, c. 20, 63 (PL 44: 861) and *DCD*, XIX, c. 13 (CCSL: 48: 679).
[70] *Contra Julianum*, III, 206 (CSEL 85.1: 501).
[71] *Contra epistolam Manichaei*, c. 33. See also c. 35.
[72] See *Dialogus de casu diaboli*, c. 9 (*Opera omnia*, ed. Franciscus Salesius Schmitt, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1984), I: 246; *De conceptu virginali*, c. 5 (*Opera omnia*, II: 146).

ST.[73] This crucial addition to Augustine's definition is also made in *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, where Aquinas defines evil as the absence of a *particular* good.[74]

Proclus on evil

Aristotle, Augustine, and Dionysius were the direct sources for Aquinas's theory of evil. Of at least equal historical importance was Proclus, whose influence St. Thomas unknowingly received via Dionysius. Proclus expounded his own very individual perspective on evil, which blends elements from Plato and Aristotle while rejecting some of Plotinus's core doctrines. Proclus sums up his own theory in *DMS* which will effectively become that of Aquinas: "Other privations are mere absences of dispositions, deriving no being from the nature to which they belong. But the good, because of the excellence of its power, gives power even to the very privation of itself."[75]

Proclus argues that evil things must also have a measure of goodness, otherwise they could not exist.[76] There is an order in the generation of evils, which has a divine cause. Although the gods cannot cause evil, they are the source of order in things that are evil. "Good things come directly from the gods, evil things only insofar as they, too, have received a portion of good and a power to be and a limit."[77] Proclus's explanation that evil can only exist in dependence on the good is taken up by Dionysius and becomes a central part of Aquinas's metaphysics of evil.[78]

Proclus considers the origin of evil from the fourfold perspective of Aristotelian causality. He notes that "the efficient causes of evils are not reasons and powers, but lack of power, weakness, and a discordant communion and mixture of dissimilar things."[79] Nor are there stable paradigms of evil; of their nature they are unlimited and indeterminate. Finally, Proclus states emphatically that there can be no final cause for evil. Final causality implies goodness, and it is unfitting that the good should be the goal of evils. It is true that we do evil because it appears good, but this is due to ignorance. Proclus therefore rules out efficient, final, and formal causality in the explanation of evil.[80] The status of evil

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[73] *ST* I, q. 48, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, IV: 493). See *In NE*, IV, l. 13; *SCG* III, c. 5–6 (*Editio Leonina*, XIV: 14).

[74] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 5, ll. 168–169): "priuatio alicuius particularis boni." See also *SCG* III, c. 5–6 (*Editio Leonina*, XIV: 14); *SCG* III, c. 7 (*Editio Leonina*, XIV: 18); *SCG* III, c. 13 (*Editio Leonina*, XIV: 35).

[75] *DMS*, 7, 31–34.   [76] *DMS*, 41, 18–19.   [77] *DMS*, 42, 5–7.

[78] *DMS*, 42, 7–12.   [79] *DMS*, 48, 16–17.   [80] *DMS*, 49, 7–9.

may be stated summarily: "For the form of evils, their nature, is a kind of defect, an indeterminateness and a privation; their [mode of existence, or] *hupostasis*, is, as it is usually said, more like a kind of [parasitic existence, or] *parhupostasis*."[81] Augustine had already argued that a being that is evil in one respect is good in itself by virtue of its existence. He lacked, however, the subtlety of concept to adequately formulate this conjunction and distinction. Proclus is explicit in stating that *parhupostasis* is the correct term to describe the mode of being of evil.[82] Evil things do not have the autonomy of beings that originate in the purposiveness and finality of proper causation; evil realities "have their being accidentally and on account of something else, and not from a principle of their own."[83] Whereas we pursue ends out of desire for the good, we may by accident attain its contrary through weakness or malfunction. The resulting evil does not exist in its own right, but depends parasitically upon the proper order of natural causation.[84]

It is because of its combination with the good that evil can be the object of desire. Its power of attraction however is only apparent, since evil does not exist in its own right but is parasitic upon its contrary. Proclus reiterates his interpretation of the *Theaetetus*, stating that evil is neither the absolute privation of the good, nor its total contrary. Evil is a "subcontrary" (*hupenantion*) which, although a privation, is "not an absolutely complete privation, but a privation that, together with a disposition and participating in the power and activity of this disposition, assumes 'the part of the contrary'. It is neither a complete privation, nor simple contrary to the good, but subcontrary to it."[85] Proclus here follows Aristotle who, in order to explain change, distinguishes between privation and the material substrate. Matter is a joint cause, with form, of what comes to be: "But the other part of the contrariety may often seem, if you concentrate your attention on it as an evil agent (*kakopoios*), not to exist at all."[86] With an oblique reference to Aristotle, Proclus emphasizes his own nuanced theory of evil: "To those who are accustomed to listen attentively to what he says it is clear that *parhupostasis* is what is really meant."[87]

In the concluding paragraphs of *DMS* Proclus considers the dilemma of evil versus providence, anticipating a standard objection of modern atheism: "If there is evil, how will it not stand in the way of that which is providential towards the good? On the other hand, if providence fills

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[81] *DMS*, 49, 9–11.   [82] *DMS*, 50, 3–9.   [83] *DMS*, 50, 9–11.
[84] *DMS*, 50, 22–25.   [85] *DMS*, 54, 18–21.   [86] *Physics*, I, 192a14–16.
[87] *DMS*, 54, 22.

the universe, how can there be evil in beings?"[88] Proclus notes that some thinkers adhere to one or other line of reasoning, denying either universal providence or the existence of evil. He aims to find a solution to this "troubling problem," a perspective that will harmonize both points of view. The solution to the problem is to be found in Proclus's fundamental position that evil does not exist autonomously as a substance or essence in itself, but as an immanent lack that inheres in an intrinsically good entity. Proclus reconciles the reality of evil with divine providence by referring to the parasitic status of evil, and the action of secondary causes. The existence of evil is dependent upon the reality of what is primarily good in itself. Insofar as it ultimately derives from providence it is good; it is evil insofar as it is influenced by something in the realm of lower causes. A being that in one respect is evil may appear good.[89]

Dionysius on evil

It would be difficult to exaggerate the influence of Proclus on Dionysius and, consequently, his indirect impact on Aquinas's theory of evil. Aquinas was convinced that the author of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* was the convert of St. Paul, hence his writings had near-apostolic authority. His treatment of evil was in fact a farrago of passages culled from Proclus's treatise on evil substances. It is unfortunate that Aquinas was not aware of Dionysius's source, and could not benefit from the masterly treatment of the topic by Proclus.

Dionysius's discussion of evil is found in chapter 4 of his treatise *On the Divine Names*, devoted to the primary names of God: goodness, beauty, and love. The question inevitably arises: if God is essential goodness itself, its plenitude and perfection, how can evil be present and operative in creation? At the end of the discussion on the positive names of God, Dionysius introduces a long deviation on the meaning of evil. One commentator had remarked that Dionysius has discussed the problem of evil "at wearisome length."[90] Indeed Dionysius himself admits that his treatment is repetitive.[91] The long section (*DN* IV, 18–35) fits badly into the chapter. Aquinas failed to notice the discontinuity of style and uneven

[88] *DMS*, 58, 2–4.   [89] *DMS*, 61, 5–10.
[90] C. E. Rolt, "Introduction," in Dionysius the Areopagite, *'The Divine Names' and 'The Mystical Theology'*, trans. C. E. Rolt (London: SPCK, 1972), 1–49, at 20.
[91] *DN* IV, 35, 179.11 (PG 3: 736A): "ὡς πολλάκις εἰρήκαμεν." References to *DN* are to *Corpus Dionysiacum,* vol. 1: *'De divinis nominibus,'* ed. Beate Regina Suchla (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990).

nature of the chapter, the textual inconsistency involved, and the dispro-
portionate importance given by Dionysius to evil in the chapter on divine
names. What should have been a brief contrast with goodness and beauty
became a lengthy excursus occupying a little more than half of chapter
IV. It is highly likely that Dionysius had his own copy of Proclus's treatise
DMS, which explains his excessive reliance upon it as a source. What he
offers is an ill-styled paraphrase, altered so as to accommodate a few basic
doctrinal changes. The style and method of this entire section jars with
the rest of his treatise.

After Aristotle and Augustine, Dionysius is the next most frequently
cited author in *QDM*, q. 1. In the discussion of *malum* he is quoted four-
teen times: seven in objections, once in a *sed contra*, once in a *corpus*, and
five times in replies. In the discussion of *culpa et pena* he is cited only
twice: once in an objection of no great significance, but decisively in the
body of a. 5 for the assertion that "suffering punishment is not evil, but
being worthy of punishment is."[92]

Having considered the divine names of goodness, beauty, and love,
Dionysius raises the objection: if God is the infinite and universal object
of desire, why does not the multitude of demons desire the beautiful and
good, but having lost their original identity as angels declined into matter,
and become a cause of evil to themselves and others? Created good, how
could they become evil? What caused them to change? The question of the
demons leads Dionysius to repeat a series of clear questions: "What in fact
is evil itself? From what origin did it arise? In what beings does it reside?"[93]
Further questions follow: Why did the Good cause evil? Having wished it,
how could he produce it? More fundamentally, asks Dionysius: If there is
another cause for evil, how can anything other than the Good be a cause?
If Providence exists, how can evil exist; how can it have arisen and not
be destroyed? And how can anything desire evil rather than the Good?
Commenting on these questions, Aquinas notes that Dionysius follows a
similar approach to Augustine, who states that one must first ask what evil
is, and then whence it arises.[94]

Drawing heavily on Proclus, Dionysius developed a metaphysics of
evil as a counterpoint to the Neoplatonic ontology of the Good. He fol-
lows loosely the order of *DMS*. Responding to the question, what is evil,

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[92] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 5, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 23, ll. 172–173): "puniri non est malum, set fieri pena
dignum." See *DN* IV, 22, 170.8–9 (PG 3: 724B).
[93] *DN* IV, 18, 163.1–2 (PG 3: 716A).
[94] See *DNB*, c. 4. Also *Contra epistolam Manichaei*, 36, 41.

he stipulates the advance premise that, since everything existing is good, evil cannot exist in itself: it is not therefore a substance but the opposite, namely the privation of a good which properly befits a being. It inheres in or latches onto a reality from whose integrity it detracts by its presence. It is thus not a positive existent.[95] As goodness is the source of being and fulfillment, evil is the source of damage and destruction.[96] Since everything that exists derives from the absolute Good, which cannot be the cause of its opposite, evil as such can have no proper reality in itself.

Regarding the origin of evil, Dionysius states that "its origin is due to a defect rather than to a capacity."[97] The question concerning origin is also addressed in connection with its purpose and finality.[98] To the question why God allows evil, he replies that divine providence permits evil for the sake of the common good: "Providence even makes good use of evil effects to turn these or others to good use individually and collectively."[99] Evil thus contributes to the overall order of the cosmos. What is evil from a particular perspective may contribute to the greater universal order. Aquinas, however, could not endorse this latter aspect of Dionysius's theory, as it conflicts with Christian teaching. Such a banal interpretation, akin to Stoicism, is more in accord with Plotinus's teaching that a particular evil contributes to the overall good.

On its location and how it acts, Dionysius excludes evil, grade by grade, from every level of reality, including matter.[100] In this he differs from Plotinus, since Dionysius does not regard matter as evil in itself. Evil cannot act on its own, since it has no existence of its own. Instead it interferes with the proper action of its host, impeding the latter's action: it is not an efficient, but rather a deficient cause.[101]

Dionysius is concerned with the essence, origin, location, and possibility of evil, and whether it is consistent with divine providence. Replying to these questions Dionysius proceeds, as Josef Stiglmayr remarks, more in full rhetorical flow than in logical order.[102] Dionysius exhorts his readers to "look to the truth of things"[103] – a variation of Proclus's "*aspicere ad rerum ypostasim.*"[104] His opening response to the question of evil is to state axiomatically: "Evil does not come from the Good. If it were from the

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[95] See *DN* IV, 18–19.   [96] See *DN* IV, 19–20.   [97] *DN* IV, 34.

[98] *DN* IV, 19–20, 33.

[99] *DN* IV, 33, 178.8–10 (PG 3: 733B). See Plotinus, *Enneads*, III.2 [47], 5, 23–26.

[100] *DN* IV, 22–29.   [101] *DN* IV, 30–32.

[102] Josef Stiglmayr, "Der Neuplatoniker Proclus als Vorlage des sogen. Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Uebel," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 16 (1895); 253–273, 721–748, at 256.

[103] *DN* IV, 19, 163.8 (PG 3: 716B): "εἰς τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων ἀλήθειαν ἀποβλέπειν."

[104] *DMS*, 4, 3–4: "ἀποβλέπειν εἰς τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων ὑπόστασιν."

Good it would not be evil."[105] It is contradictory to suppose that goodness is the source of evil.

The impossibility of evil is linked, according to Dionysius, to the conditions and demands of existence. Goodness and Being are reciprocally and intrinsically related: goodness coincides with being. Evil, on the other hand, has no being and can therefore not derive from the Good. The Good can cause only goodness, Being can cause only being; since evil has no being it has no power to produce anything. It survives and endures in dependence upon the reality from which it detracts; it draws its power from the subject in which it resides as defect, weakness and aberration. It is not complete privation, since that would render the subject totally powerless. Evil is privation which survives only in dependence upon the good. Dionysius examines the various levels of reality to show that evil abides in none. He concludes that evil has no subsistence of its own, but survives by inhering in a being that has positive existence. It only has accidental existence.[106] He adopts Proclus's term *parhupostasis* to describe this mode of dependent existence. The concept of evil as parasitic provided him with a solution to the difficulties arising from the reality of evil, including the apparent conflict with Providence. The definition of evil as *priuatio boni* is one of Dionysius's prime legacies of Aquinas.

Aquinas's use of Dionysius

In his commentary on *On the Divine Names* Aquinas provided an exhaustive analysis of Dionysius's theory of evil. There are only scattered references in *QDM*, yet these suffice to convey Dionysius's core doctrine. They may be summarized as follows.

1. Evil is the privation of good. Aquinas refers to Dionysius in explaining the existential status of evil. Evil does not exist as a subject in itself, but as a privation in an existing subject.[107] Evil is in the good not as a positive reality, but as the lack or absence in a being of a good that is its natural due.[108] To define evil as privation is simultaneously to state that it has no separate, independent, reality. In the opening objection of

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[105] *DN* IV, 19, 163.9–10 (PG 3: 716B): "Τὸ κακὸν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τἀγαθοῦ, καὶ εἰ ἐκ τἀγαθοῦ ἐστιν, οὐ κακόν."

[106] See *DN* IV, 32, 177.3–4 (PG 3: 732C): "κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς καὶ δι᾽ ἄλλο καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἀρχῆς οἰκείας."

[107] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, args. 1 and 2; a. 2, ad 1 and ad 3. *DN* IV, 20, 166.9–167.24 (PG 3: 720 B–D); 21, 168.12–22 (PG 3: 721C).

[108] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, arg. 1; a. 2, ad 1; *DN* IV, 20, 166.9–167.24 (PG 3: 720B–D).

QDM, q. 1, a. 2, Aquinas cites virtually verbatim Dionysius's statement that evil is neither an existing thing nor in existing things. The objection argues that since every existing thing is good, and since there can be no evil in goodness, there cannot be any evil in existing things; hence there is no evil in good.[109] Aquinas no doubt agrees with this statement from Dionysius, but not with the implication of the objection, that is, that evil has no reality whatsoever, or that evil does not somehow exist in dependence upon the good. Aquinas's position, relying on Dionysius, is that evil has the reality of a privation which inheres in a positively good subject. He explains the ambiguity latent in the objection: when Dionysius says that evil is not in an existing thing, he means it is not a positively existing reality but does not exclude that it exists as a privation in a subject.

In a. 1, Aquinas had referred (without mentioning its Aristotelian source) to the distinction between an autonomously existing subject and an inherent characteristic or quality. This distinction is indispensable for Dionysius's view that evil is privation rather than a real being. Aquinas emphasizes that it is important to distinguish between the positive ground, in virtue of which something is a real subject, and the evil in it which is not something real, but the privation of a particular good.[110] Expressed differently, the subject in which evil occurs "is something; yet evil itself is not something (*aliquid*), but the privation of some particular good."[111]

Aquinas was aware of the historical difficulty arising from the failure of Platonism to recognize the distinction between matter and privation.[112] Aquinas, following Aristotle, distinguishes the two, and can thus explain the privation that is proper to matter. Material beings are all characterized by privation in a secondary, accidental, sense, but cannot be essentially identified as privation itself. Prime matter, devoid of determination and perfection, is a theoretically abstracted principle that must be posited at the origin of all material bodies in order to make sense of substantial change. Prime matter may potentially be determined by countless forms, but never exists as such in total potency: it is always determined by one form or another. It is true that, determined by one form, it is deprived of all others. It cannot be identified with privation as such, because it is never totally deprived: it only ever exists together with

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[109] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, arg. 1 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 9, ll. 2–4); see *DN* IV, 167.16–17 (PG 3: 720D), and also IV, 21, 168.12–14 (PG 3: 721C).

[110] See *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, c.   [111] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1 c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 6, ll. 237–240).

[112] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, c.

a determining form. Matter is not privation as such, since it is always determined by some form or other. In Aquinas's view, the Platonist equation of privation with matter prohibited a satisfactory solution to the question of evil.

In common with the authors whom we have examined, Aquinas maintains that, since evil is a privation and not an autonomous subject, it can only survive by inhering in an existing good. In an objection[113] to this position Aquinas cites Dionysius's teaching[114] that evil is neither an existing reality nor does it exist in things: since every existing thing is good, and there can be no evil in goodness, likewise there can be no evil in existing things. It is therefore obvious that there is no evil in good. In his reply, Aquinas explains the ambiguity implicit in the objection. When he says that evil is not in an existing thing, Dionysius means that it is not a positive reality existing of itself in a subject; evil is rather a privation in a subject.

2. Evil things are caused by good. Aquinas appeals to Dionysius to support the view that evil things ultimately derive their entire reality from goodness. He invokes Dionysius's authority in the *sed contra* statement of *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3: "the source and end of all evils is good."[115] As universal cause, the Good is the source of all things, including the deficiencies of being. Dionysius is cited to contrary purpose in an objection: "Evil does not come from good, and whatever comes from good is not evil."[116] In his reply Aquinas explains that, according to Dionysius, the good is not the intrinsic cause of evil but rather, as stated later in the same chapter, its accidental cause.[117] The good cannot be the direct source of evil, since they are opposites and nothing can cause its contrary. That is the sense in which Dionysius cites Matt. 7:18: "A good tree cannot bear evil fruit."[118] The good may however be the accidental cause of evil.

Aquinas refers to Dionysius in clarifying how it is possible for the Good to be the ultimate source of evil. St. Thomas wishes to affirm that the Good is the cause of all things, and to remove any suggestion of a separate

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[113] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, arg. 1.   [114] *DN* IV, 20, 166.9–167.24 (PG 3: 720B–D).

[115] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, s. c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 14: ll. 137–138): "omnium malorum principium et finis est bonum." See *DN* IV, 31, 176.13–14 (PG 3: 732B): "πάντων καὶ τῶν κακῶν ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος ἔσται τὸ ἀγαθόν."

[116] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, arg. 5 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 13, ll. 18–19): "malum non est ex bono; et si ex bono est, non est malum." *DN* IV, 19, 163.9–10 (PG 3: 716B): "Τὸ κακὸν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τἀγαθοῦ, καὶ εἰ ἐκ τἀγαθοῦ, ἐστιν οὐ κακόν."

[117] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 5. See *DN* IV, 32, 177.3–4 (PG 3: 732C).

[118] *DN* IV, 21, 168.17–18 (PG 3: 721C).

cause of existence for evil things. God, he explains, is the universal cause of all things, even those that are deficient. With his definition of evil as *priuatio boni*, Aquinas is able to meet the objection that the existence of evil entails that God does not exist. Beings are evil insofar as they are deficient, but good because they possess (in limited measure) the perfection of being. If entirely deprived of goodness they would not exist. Paradoxically this means that since evil things exist, we must affirm the existence of goodness; it is this differentiation of good and evil that in *SCG* allows Aquinas to proclaim: "*Si malum est, Deus est.*" There Aquinas refers to the objection reported by Boethius: "*Si Deus est, unde malum?*"[119] Since evils occur in the world, there can be no God. Aquinas replies: "But it could be argued to the contrary: if evil exists, God exists. For, there would be no evil if the order of good were taken away, since its privation is evil. But this order would not exist if there were no God."[120] Whatever power evil has, it draws from the good in which it parasitically dwells. As Dionysius states in *DN* IV, 32, evil things are not totally evil in every respect; whatever is totally lacking in goodness has no being or power. Thus evil draws from the host in which it dwells the very power with which it opposes that same subject.

Since evil has no positive existence, but is the privation of a perfection due to an actual entity, its "activity" is likewise parasitic upon the agency of its host. In reply to another objection in *QDM* Aquinas interprets Dionysius: "Evil as such corrupts, but it causes something to come to be insofar as it retains some good in it, not insofar as it is evil."[121] To explain the "causality" of evil, Aquinas combines the perspectives of Aristotle and Dionysius. An objection in a. 3 argues that since the good may *per accidens* cause evil, its causality extends to evil itself.[122] To illustrate accidental causality the objection cites Aristotle's example of someone digging a hole and accidentally finding a treasure.[123] In his reply Aquinas clarifies that accidental causation may be viewed either from the point of view of the cause (*ex parte cause*) or the point of view of the effect (*ex parte effectus*). Using the example of a builder, he explains (from the point of view of the

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[119] *De consolatione philosophiae*, III, pr. 4.

[120] *SCG* III, c. 71 (*Editio Leonina*, XIV: 210): "Esset autem e contrario arguendum: Si malum est, Deus est. Non enim esset malum sublato ordine boni, cuius privatio est malum. Hic autem ordo non esset, si Deus non esset." The translation is from Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, vol. 3.1, trans. Vernon J. Bourke (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 241.

[121] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 16. See *DN* IV, 20, 164.22–165.8 (PG 3: 717B).

[122] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, arg. 14.

[123] See *Metaphysics*, V, 1025a14–19. Aristotle speaks of someone digging a hole for a plant, Aquinas of a gravedigger.

cause) that if the builder is musical, we may say that a musician is the accidental cause of the house; if, quite independently of the builder's activity,
the house turns out to be lucky or unlucky, although it is true to say that
the builder is the accidental cause of an unlucky house, we cannot say that
his causality extends to the misfortunes that befall the house.[124] In this
sense, Aquinas explains, "the action of the good does not extend to an evil
result."[125] He reinforces the point with an appeal to Dionysius: "It is for
this reason that Dionysius says in his work *On the Divine Names* that evil
is not only contrary to the intention but also contrary to the course [of
action] since motion does not of itself have evil as its goal."[126] It is interesting that Aquinas adds Aristotle's concept of *motus* to Dionysius's text to
bring out the notion of intrinsic and immanent finality. In an objection
introducing article 5, Aquinas refers to similar statements.[127]

Aquinas's opening argument in the corpus of a. 3, that only the good
can be the cause of evil, combines elements from Aristotle and Dionysius.
Adopting Aristotle's terminology he points out that evil cannot have an
intrinsic (*per se*) cause, but can occur only through accidental (*per accidens*) causality. As the discovery of a treasure by the gravedigger is beyond
his intention (*preter intentionem*) and therefore accidental, similarly, since
evil cannot be directly intended or desired – otherwise it would be the
same as goodness – it must lie beyond intention and desire. It can only
be the unintended consequence of a perceived good. The remainder of
Aquinas's account echoes Dionysius:

> Evil as such cannot be intended, nor in any way willed or desired, since
> being desirable has the nature of good, to which evil as such is contrary.
> And so we see that no person does any evil except intending something
> that seems good to the person […]. And so it remains that evil does not
> have an intrinsic (*per se*) cause.[128]

3. Aquinas acquiesces to Dionysius's view that goodness transcends
being.[129] In a. 2, which asks whether evil exists in good, Aquinas follows

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[124] See *Metaphysics*, XI, 8, 1064b19–20.

[125] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 14 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 17, ll. 411–412): "actio boni non pertingit ad malum
terminum."

[126] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 14 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 17, ll. 412–415): "Propter quod Dionysius dicit IV
cap. De diuinis nominibus quod malum non solum est preter intentionem, set etiam preter uiam,
quia motus non per se terminatur ad malum." See *DN* IV, 32, 177.7–10 (PG 3: 732C).

[127] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 5, arg. 10 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 22, ll. 67–70). See *DN* IV, 19, 163.15–19 (PG
3: 716C); 31, 176.13–177.2 (PG 3: 732B); 32, 177.7–10 (PG 3: 732C).

[128] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 14, ll. 149–158). See *DN* IV, 19, 163.11–19 (PG 3: 716C);
32, 177.3–4 (PG 3: 732C).

[129] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 2, c. See *DN* IV, 3, 146.6–12 (PG 3: 697A).

the reasoning of Dionysius in allowing that goodness has a certain priority before being.[130] This reasoning, I suggest, is questionable. It seems a concession to Dionysius, a rare case where Aquinas bows to the putative disciple of St. Paul. Aquinas's reasoning is that prime matter, devoid of determination, is ordained as potency towards actual fulfillment. He explains Dionysius's suggestion that goodness has greater extension than being as referring to the wider scope of goodness as final cause. This is to exploit an ambiguity in the meaning of goodness: besides referring to what is actual, it may also convey the attractiveness of what, as potential, still remains to be actualized. The good attracts that which is not yet actual, thus embracing the potential as well as the actual. This primacy, however, is only apparent. What is potential only has conceptual meaning in relation to what is actually in existence, and its desirability is only in prospect of it becoming actual. We may recall that its lack of form and determination is exactly why Plotinus regarded matter as essentially evil.

Authorities compared

To the question, which is the most important authority for Aquinas's definition of evil in *QDM*, there are three possible answers.

(a) As the a priori foundation of all theological truth, the Bible is without qualification Aquinas's most authoritative source. Scripture, however, does not enter into the argumentation of *QDM*, q. 1, but serves as a foil to explain particular points, or as pretext for supposed objections. As an explicit authority Scripture is cited only twice in *sed contra* statements, once in response to an objection, but surprisingly in no less than ten opening counterarguments. Scripture is an important source not just for its obvious authority but, as the devil quotes the Bible for his own purposes, Aquinas recognizes that certain phrases may be suitably quoted in apparent contradiction of his own position. These he proceeds to interpret in their proper context by subtle analysis and distinction.

(b) If numerical frequency is the measure of authority, then Aristotle with twenty nine references is Aquinas's most important philosophical source in *QDM*, q. 1, aa. 1–3. Eighteen occur in objections, two in a corpus (aa. 1–2), but a significant eight in replies. There is only one *sed contra* appeal to Aristotle. He features less in the discussion on *culpa*

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[130] Dionysius had followed Proclus in this (*DMS*, 32–38).

et pena, where he is cited in four objections and just once in a reply. Aristotle's influence in the first three articles, however, is far greater than suggested by frequency of citation.

(c) If the criterion for authority is explicit appeal as evidenced by *sed contra* statements, Augustine may be considered Aquinas's most important source in *QDM*, q. 1. Compared to Aristotle's single *sed contra* appearance, Augustine features nine times, albeit once erroneously in a reference to *On Faith, to Peter*, established later as a work by Fulgentius of Ruspe. The overall importance of both Aristotle and Augustine is clear from the fact that Aquinas refers to each approximately 500 times in the entire *quaestio*.

To assess adequately the relative importance of the three suggested authorities, a more nuanced comparison than that of numerical frequency is required. It is important to distinguish between allusions in counter arguments, *sed contra* statements, the *corpus* of articles, and replies to objections. We may largely discount references in the preliminary objections, since these are generally quotations deliberately quoted out of context to bolster an objection conjured up by Aquinas. While not properly pertaining to his doctrine, the opening objections reveal his detailed knowledge of the works concerned, and the replies provide valuable clarifications of his position and attitude to sources. Confining, however, our count to "positive" allusions, we note that there are fifteen references to Augustine, eleven to Aristotle, and eight to Dionysius. For the first three articles, dealing with the substantive question of *malum*, the comparison between Aristotle and Augustine is particularly interesting. Augustine is cited six times in *sed contra* statements, and only twice in the *corpus* of an article or reply; by contrast Aristotle is only invoked once *sed contra*, but nine times in the body of articles and in replies. It is noteworthy that in the lengthy corpus of a. 3, where Aquinas explains that evil is ultimately caused by the good, Augustine is cited only on a minor point. Thus it seems that while Augustine is invoked as the premier authority, Aristotle provides the logical and metaphysical vocabulary for Aquinas's argumentation. Of the nine positive references to Augustine in the substantive discussion of evil in the first three articles, six are in *sed contra* declarations, and only three enter into the fabric of Aquinas's argumentation. Aristotle is cited only once in *sed contra* support, but a total of nine times in Aquinas's analysis of *malum* as *priuatio boni*.

The relatively few references to Dionysius – eight in total – do not reflect his importance for Aquinas in *QDM*, a. 1. While he never wrote a

commentary on a work by Augustine, Aquinas had years earlier written a close commentary on *On the Divine Names*. As a student he heard Albert's commentary on the complete *Corpus Areopagiticum*. He was intimately familiar with Dionysian thought, which deeply influenced his vision of the universe. Dionysius strongly influenced the discussion of evil in the *ST*. St. Thomas prefaces his definition of evil in the opening article of *ST* I, q. 48 with a *sed contra* statement from Dionysius: "Evil is neither an existent nor a good."[131] It is to Dionysius, moreover, that he refers the definition of evil as *quaedam absentia boni*, which he explains in the following manner. We learn about one opposite from the other (e.g. night and day), hence knowledge of the good is necessary to understand the meaning of evil.[132] The good, Aquinas continues, is that which all things desire,[133] and since what things most fundamentally desire is their existence and perfection, evil which is the opposite of goodness cannot refer to any real existence, form or nature. Evil must therefore be understood as the absence of good.[134] A survey of allusions in *ST* I, q. 48, aa. 1–4, which correspond thematically to the *QDM*, q. 1, aa. 1–3, reveals that Dionysius occupies a greater status in the *ST* than in the *quaestio*. As well as the *sed contra* statement (absent from *QDM*), he is mentioned in two objections, twice in the body of the article, and twice in replies to objections. With two *sed contra* references Augustine exerts more authority *sensu stricto*, but is otherwise limited to two objections.

It is especially remarkable that Aquinas omits all mention of Augustine in his lucid treatment of evil in *SCG* III, cc. 4–15. Some aspects of his doctrine are expressed, most importantly the distinction that evil has not an efficient, but a deficient cause.[135] Augustine is certainly the main source for Manichean doctrines with which Aquinas is primarily concerned, but he is nowhere mentioned by name. Aristotle is frequently cited, and there are three significant references to Dionysius. Given the pagan audience for whom the work was intended, Aquinas prudently tailored his text *ad modum recipientis*, omitting any mention of the Bishop of North Africa.

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[131] *ST* I, q. 48, a. 1, s. c. (*Editio Leonina*, IV: 490): "Malum non est existens neque bonum." *DN* 4, 165.11 (PG 3: 717C): "Τὸ μὲν οὖν αὐτοκακὸν οὔτε ὂν οὔτε ἀγαθὸν."

[132] See *ST* I, q. 48, a. 1; *ST* I, q. 14, a. 10, ad 4; *SCG* I, c. 71.

[133] In *SCG* III, c. 3 (*Editio Leonina*, XIV: 9), besides the usual source in Aristotle, Aquinas also refers to Dionysius that all things crave the good and the best; see *DN* IV, 4, 152.7–8 (PG 3: 704B).

[134] See *ST* I, q. 48, a. 1, c.

[135] See *SCG* III, c. 10 (*Editio Leonina*, XIV: 25). See Augustine, *DCD*, XII, c. 7 (CCSL 48: 362).

Moral luck and the capital vices in De malo: *gluttony and lust*

M. V. Dougherty

The *QDM* is replete with some of Thomas Aquinas's best examples of intricate moral situations, many of which depict a variety of moral transgressions. These detailed scenarios, which feature such agents as a thwarted fornicator, a drunken monk, and a citizen whose attempt at tyrannicide includes the seduction of the tyrant's wife, vividly illustrate elements of Aquinas's moral philosophy. Aquinas's sensitivity to a variety of moral situations in *QDM* should not be surprising, as much of the work is organized according to the longstanding and venerable framework of the seven capital vices (*uitia capitalia*) or so-called seven deadly sins. The present chapter considers several unusual examples in *QDM* that illustrate the capital vices of lust (*luxuria*) and gluttony (*gula*). A careful analysis shows that Aquinas was aware of what present-day philosophers designate as moral luck, that is, how accidental factors entirely outside the control of an agent might be relevant in defining an agent's moral culpability.[1] Defenders of moral luck in contemporary philosophy have generally not found much support within the history of medieval philosophy.[2] *QDM* shows, however, that Aquinas was aware of the issue of moral luck, and his sophisticated treatment of the issue is relevant for present-day discussions.

The problem of the capital vices in the Thomistic corpus

The seven capital vices are subject to detailed analysis in *QDM*. One half of the sixteen questions considers them, but with the comparative brevity

[1] The classic statements of the problem of moral luck are: Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers: 1973–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1982), 20–39, and Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 24–38.

[2] For a discussion of the role of contingency in the formation of the virtues, see John Bowlin, *Contingency and Fortune in Aquinas's Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). For the claim that Aquinas rejects luck in acts, see especially 66–68.

of the treatment and some moderation in the number of articles, Aquinas's exposition takes up only one quarter of the text. After an introductory question on the capital vices in general (q. 8), Aquinas then turns to them individually (qq. 9–15), following generally the names and order offered by Gregory the Great in the *Moralia*: vainglory (*inanis gloria / gloria uana*), envy (*inuidia*), apathy (*accidia / tristitia*), anger (*ira*), avarice (*auaritia*), gluttony (*gula / uentris ingluuies*), and lust (*luxuria*).[3] Aquinas regularly presents the defining characteristic of these seven as their ability to cause other sins by way of final causality.[4] For example, following Gregory, Aquinas counts disorderly speech, rudeness, improper joy, and sexual impurity among the sins resulting from gluttony, noting that the glutton's immoderate pleasure in food in drink impedes the governance of the soul by reason.[5] Similarly, also following Gregory, Aquinas includes self-love, hatred of God, and inconstancy among the sins occasioned by lust.[6]

Even though Aquinas also analyzes the seven capital vices in the *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* (*In Sent*) and *ST*, some commentators have questioned his commitment to this traditional arrangement. In his *In Sent*, Aquinas simply addresses the seven capital vices collectively and somewhat cursorily in the course of one article.[7] Both *QDM* and the *Secunda secundae* of the *ST* offer substantive treatments, but while *QDM* preserves the organization of the seven, in the *ST* they lose their unity by being diffused into a larger Aristotelian framework of virtues and vices.[8] According to one interpreter, "Aquinas gives some indication of not being too interested" in the organizational structure of the seven deadly sins.[9] More recently, another has concluded that "one of the deliberate structural accomplishments of Thomas's *Summa* is to reject an organization according to the seven capital sins," and further, "one of the best-calculated effects of Thomas's organization of *Summa* 2–2 is to push the seven capital vices to the margin."[10] Others contend that the Aristotelian orientation

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[3] See Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, XXXI, c. 45 (CCSL 143-B: 1610); Aquinas, *QDM*, q. 8, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 194, ll. 297–323). Gregory's list also appears in Peter Lombard, *Sententiae*, II, d. 42, c. 6.

[4] See *QDM*, q. 8, a. 1; *In Sent* II, d. 42, q. 2, a. 3; *ST* I-II, q. 84, a. 4.   [5] *QDM*, q. 14, a. 4, c.

[6] *QDM*, q. 15, a. 4, c.   [7] *In Sent* II, d. 42, q. 2, a. 3.

[8] Two earlier, generally themed articles on the seven capital vices appear in the *Prima secundae* at *ST* I-II, q. 84, aa. 3–4, but the detailed treatment of each vice does not occur until the *Secunda secundae*.

[9] Siegfried Wenzel, "The Seven Deadly Sins: Some Problems of Research," *Speculum* 43 (1968): 1–22, at 14. A similar assessment is found in Morton W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins: An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1967), 87.

[10] Mark D. Jordan, *Rewritten Theology: Aquinas after His Readers* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 9, 134.

of Aquinas's approach to ethics limits his interest in the inherited frame-
work of the capital vices.[11] How does one account for Aquinas's seemingly
inconsistent commitment to the value of the traditional scheme, given its
prominence in *QDM*, where eight of the sixteen questions consider the
capital vices? Aquinas's apparently ambivalent orientation to this authori-
tative moral framework is not anomalous among major thinkers of the
later Middle Ages, however; another interpreter has remarked that the
traditional septenary of vices "never won wide support in academic moral
philosophy and theology, in part because a theoretical rationale for it was
too hard to produce."[12] Nevertheless, there has been renewed interest in
examining afresh Aquinas's relationship to the long history of theoretical
reflections on the seven capital vices, including the capital vices of glut-
tony and lust.[13]

Gluttony and lust

Aquinas examines the capital vice of gluttony (*gula*) in q. 14 of *QDM*. In
four moderately brief articles, he argues that gluttony is sinful as the inor-
dinate desire for food or drink; gluttony can be mortal or venial according
to the way one pursues it; gluttony can be considered as dividing into five
species; and finally, gluttony belongs among the capital vices.[14] Aquinas is
heavily indebted to Gregory the Great's *Moralia* in his presentation of this
capital vice, as he invokes the work in all four questions. The third art-
icle, for example, consists entirely of a justification of five species of glut-
tony divided along the ways Gregory had observed one can be tempted.
According to a later medieval tradition these five were interpreted with
the verse: "hastily, sumptuously, excessively, ravenously, and fastidi-
ously."[15] Nevertheless, Aquinas incorporates additional traditions beyond
Gregory for considering this capital vice, since he occasionally mentions

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[11] Richard Newhauser, "Introduction," in *In the Garden of Evil: The Vices and Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Newhauser (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005), vii–xix, at xi.

[12] Bonnie Kent, "On the Track of Lust: *Luxuria*, Ockham, and the Scientists," in Newhauser, *In the Garden of* Evil, 349–370, at 354. See also Kent, "The Moral Life," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. S. McGrade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 231–253, at 244–245.

[13] For a recent approach, see Eileen C. Sweeney, "Aquinas on the Seven Deadly Sins: Tradition and Innovation," in *Sin in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Richard G. Newhauser and Susan J. Ridyard (Suffolk: York Medieval Press / Boydell and Brewer, 2012), 85–106, especially 95–96.

[14] *QDM*, q. 14, aa. 1–4.

[15] *QDM*, q. 14, a. 3, pro. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 264, l. 10): "Prepropere, laute, nimis, ardenter, studiose." This verse also appears in *QDM*, q. 2, a. 6, c.

in objections an alternate specification where drunkenness (*ebrietas*) is one species of gluttony.[16] This competing division of gluttony that includes drunkenness is defended more explicitly in the *ST*, as Aquinas invokes Romans 13:13 as its justification, and the inclusion of drunkenness under gluttony was common among Aquinas's predecesssors.[17] The presence of the respective Gregorian and Pauline specifications of gluttony testifies to the range of authoritative materials Aquinas incorporates in his presentation of the capital vices in *QDM*.

The penultimate question of *QDM* considers the capital vice of lust (*luxuria*) in four articles. Again, much of what Aquinas says there is traditional, as he invokes the authority of Gregory, Peter Lombard, and Augustine, among others, to relay several medieval ethical commonplaces: lust is sinful, acts of lust are mortal sins, lust divides into six species, and finally, lust is fittingly included among the capital vices.[18] None of this is particularly controversial or novel within a standard medieval context. This relatively short and customary treatment of lust in q. 15 is complemented, however, by Aquinas's analyses of acts of lust that appear in the earlier articles of *QDM*. Detailed and vivid cases involving lust occur throughout much of the work, and they play an important role in clarifying key features of Aquinas's moral psychology and action theory. Any comprehensive treatment of Aquinas's view of lust in *QDM* does not need to be restricted to q. 15, but may profitably include the rich presentations that are interspersed in the preceding questions.

Although gluttony and lust are, respectively, the last two capital vices treated in *QDM*, Aquinas throughout the work often references them together. He contends that gluttony and lust are both opposed to temperance,[19] they both relate to touch,[20] and collectively they pertain to the most intense of physical pleasures.[21] Furthermore, gluttony and lust are paradigmatic examples of situations where agents pursue apparent and false goods instead of real ones.[22] Nevertheless, Aquinas maintains that

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[16] *QDM*, q. 14, a. 4, arg. 2: "Drunkenness is a certain species of gluttony," (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII, 266, ll. 14–15): "ebrietas autem est quedam species gule." See also *QDM*, q. 14, a. 2, arg. 4 and s. c. 1.

[17] *ST* II-II, q. 150, a. 1. c.: "drunkenness is contained under gluttony as a species under a genus, for gluttony is divided into surfeiting and drunkenness, which the apostle forbids" (*Editio Leonina*, X: 182): "Et [ebrietas] continetur sub gula sicut species sub genere: dividitur enim gula in comessationem et ebrietatem, quae prohibet Apostolus." See *Summa Halesiana*, lib. 2, sec. pars, inq. 3, tract. 4, sect. 2, q. 1, tit. 6, d. 2, c. 1, where *ebrietas* is treated under gluttony within an account of the seven capital vices, in Alexander Hales, *Summa theologica*, vol. 3 (Clarae Aquae [Quaracchi]: Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1930), III: 583.

[18] *QDM*, q. 15, aa. 1–4. [19] *QDM*, q. 15, a. 1, c. [20] *QDM*, q. 8, a. 1, ad 9.

[21] *QDM*, q. 15, a. 3, c.; see also q. 13, a. 1, ad 6. [22] *QDM*, q. 12, a. 2, c.

gluttony and lust must be distinguished because the pleasure that is the object of gluttony is of a different nature than the pleasure that is the object of lust.[23]

Examples of lust

Of the various examples of lust discussed by Aquinas throughout *QDM*, most involve either fornication (*fornicatio*) or adultery (*adulterium*). Aquinas regularly characterizes acts of both kinds as sinful and intrinsically evil (*secundum se mali*).[24] He proposes for consideration, for instance, whether the sinfulness of fornication can be avoided if one intends to beget a child in order to cultivate the worship of God,[25] and whether a virtuous man can blamelessly commit adultery with the wife of a tyrant in order to kill the tyrant and liberate his country.[26] Unsurprisingly, Aquinas answers both in the negative. He also describes various agents in uncommon situations and considers whether any of them should be considered adulterers, including a man who has relations with a woman while mistakenly thinking she is his wife,[27] and someone who has sexual relations with another while being ignorant that the other is married.[28] On a few occasions, Aquinas discusses whether an agent who steals in order to commit adultery is better regarded as a thief or as an adulterer.[29] Even Aquinas's main example in *QDM* to illustrate his fundamental metaphysical position that evil does not have an intrinsic cause notably features an adulterer: Aquinas argues that no one does evil except by intending what seems good, just as the adulterer pursues adultery under the aspect of the good of pleasure.[30] Additionally, both adultery and fornication are featured prominently in subtle discussions about whether the incompleteness of some sinful acts can render them venial rather than mortal.[31] These examples involving lust illustrate key points of Aquinas's moral philosophy, such as the necessity of knowledge for voluntary action, how circumstances specify the species of sins, or how sins differ in gravity.

Versions of many – if not most – of the above mentioned examples are found in ancient, scriptural, or theological texts, and Aquinas sometimes credits these earlier sources. To be sure, he is not the first medieval master to recognize the pedagogical importance of memorable and entertaining

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[23] *QDM*, q. 8, a. 1, ad 6.   [24] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 3, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 36, l. 66).
[25] *QDM*, q. 15, a. 1, arg. 3 and ad 3.   [26] *QDM*, q. 15, a. 1, arg. 5 and ad 5.
[27] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 6, ad 11; q. 3. a. 8, c.   [28] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 6, ad 11.
[29] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 6, ad 2; q. 7, a. 3, c.; q. 8, a. 1, ad 15.
[30] *QDM*, q. 1, a. 3, c. and ad 17; q. 3, a. 12, ad 3.   [31] *QDM*, q. 7, a. 3, c.; q. 15, a. 2, ad 16.

examples to illustrate sophisticated points of ethics. Nor is Aquinas the first medieval master to employ a good number of examples involving acts of lust to highlight fundamental elements of a moral theory when more restrained examples could plausibly suffice. Peter Abelard's *Ethica* is a precedent that arguably surpasses Aquinas's *QDM* for its sustained dependence on unusual and memorable examples of acts of lust, and both thinkers have several examples in common in their respective works. Perhaps an additional reason motivating Aquinas to depend so heavily on examples of lust in ethical discussions is his view that the wrongness of adultery is uncontroversial. He states in *QDM* that adultery's wrongness is not only widely known because of its prohibition in the Decalogue, but additionally "anyone is able to observe immediately by natural reason that adultery is a sin."[32] Aquinas appears slightly less confident, however, about any such universal agreement regarding fornication, at least insofar as he occasionally offers examples in *QDM* of agents who are unsure whether fornication is sinful.[33] In other works Aquinas even offers examples depicting agents who mistakenly judge fornication to be *obligatory* in certain situations.[34] The difference in emphasis in the respective treatments of adultery and fornication may in part consist in Aquinas's contention that while adultery is directly contrary to the precepts of the Decalogue, the prohibition of fornication is derived from the prohibition of adultery "through a certain inference."[35] Despite these minor differences regarding the knowability of the prohibited status of both adultery and fornication, Aquinas's reliance on examples of lust throughout *QDM* remains notable.[36]

Moral luck case #1: a tale of two fornicators

One striking example involving the capital vice of lust appears in *QDM*, q. 2, a. 2, in a consideration of whether sin requires an external act in

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[32] *QDM*, q. 15, a. 2, ad 3 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 275, ll. 243–244): "Quilibet autem statim ratione naturali aduertere potest adulterium esse peccatum." For similar statements, see *QDM*, q. 2, a. 9, c.; q. 14, a. 2, ad s. c.

[33] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 9; q. 3, a. 8, c.; q. 7, a. 1, arg. 18; q. 8, a. 4, ad 1; q. 15, a. 1, ad 1.

[34] *In Sent* II, d. 39, q. 3, a. 3, arg. 5 and ad 5; *QDV*, q. 17, a. 4, ad 8; *In Rom*, cap. 14, l. 2.

[35] *QDM*, q. 14, a. 2, ad s. c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 264, l. 261): "per quandam reductionem." Elsewhere in *QDM* Aquinas describes adultery as a species of fornication, where the added circumstance of being married changes what would be fornication to the new species of adultery. Aquinas observes that in such a case, "there are not two sins, but one" at *QDM*, q. 2, a. 6, ad 12 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 49, ll. 378–379): "non sunt duo peccata set unum." See also *QDM*, q. 2, a. 6, ad 2 and ad 12.

[36] Aquinas describes adultery and fornication as mid-range sins among all sins against one's neighbor: the two fall short of the seriousness of homicide but exceed robbery and theft. See *QDM*, q. 2, a. 10, c.

addition to an act of the will. To illustrate the issue, Aquinas deploys an example in arg. 9 that features two agents, each of whom independently seeks to commit the sin of fornication. Aquinas explains:

> There are two people having the same intention for committing the same sin, such as fornication, and one has the opportunity and succeeds in his intention, and the other does not have the opportunity but wishes he had.[37]

In setting up the situation, Aquinas appears to be aware of the problem of moral luck, that is, the issue of whether accidental factors wholly outside the control of an agent are relevant in determining the agent's moral culpability. Aquinas frames the objection so that both the successful fornicator and the would-be fornicator are in perfect symmetry, adding, "It is clear that between these two there is no difference in regard to what is in their power."[38] That Aquinas is aware of what contemporary philosophers designate as moral luck is evident from the objection's attempt to set aside all accidental factors in the moral evaluation of the two agents, as the objection continues, "But sin is not considered according to something that is not in someone's power."[39] With this qualification, the objection appears to be constructed to close off the possibility of incorporating moral luck in the moral evaluation of agents.

Aquinas's remarks elsewhere in *QDM* indicate his awareness that there are differences in the way agents can will the same act, so the postulated symmetry of the two agents is notable. He observes that "one who commits a sin with greater lust sins to a greater extent, because this is a sign that the movement of the will is stronger."[40] Aquinas considers the varying intensities that can attend volitional activity, noting that inequalities of the will in acts of sinning generate inequality in sinning, so that the greater the intensity, the greater the sin.[41] In the case of the successful and would-be fornicators, however, the complete equality in volitional activity of the two agents at this point is assumed, and the only differentiating factor is that of mere opportunity. Aquinas provides a significant expansion of this case later in q. 2, a. 2, ad 8, which happens to be the

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[37] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 2, arg. 9 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 32, ll. 63–67): "Sint duo aliqui habentes equalem uoluntatem idem peccatum committendi, puta fornicationem, et unus habet opportunitatem et implet uoluntatem suam, et alius non habet set uellet habere."

[38] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 2, arg. 9 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 32, ll. 67–69): "manifestum est quod inter istos duos non est differentia quantum ad aliquid quod sit in potestate eorum."

[39] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 2, arg. 9 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 32, ll. 69–70): "Set secundum id quod non est in potestate alicuius non attenditur peccatum."

[40] *QDM*, q. 3, a. 11, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 90, ll. 54–57): "et qui cum maiori libidine facit peccatum, magis peccat, quia hoc est signum quod motus uoluntatis sit fortior."

[41] *QDM*, q. 16, a. 3, ad s. c. 4; q. 2, a. 2, ad 8.

longest reply to an objection in all 101 articles of *QDM*. He describes an agent who, like the unsuccessful fornicator, is denied an opportunity to sin, but with a twist: a new unexpected opportunity emerges. According to this expanded scenario, the previously unsuccessful fornicator, through another movement of the will, is able to perform the external act that was initially denied an opportunity. Aquinas explains:

> If someone by one movement of the will wills to sin, and when one does not have the opportunity to sin the movement of the will ceases, but later having an opportunity by another movement of the will, the act of the will is renewed, thus in that person there is a twofold evil will, one without an act, and the other with an act.[42]

In this variation of the case, there are two moments of the will in the initially denied, but eventually successful fornicator: the first where the agent is prevented from achieving the external act of fornication, and the second, where the movement of the will attains the external act when the opportunity for fornication later presents itself. Although Aquinas does not raise the issue here, one may wonder whether Aquinas would consider such an agent to have committed more than one moral failure, where the first was not attended by an external act and the second was. Aquinas is content here to ascribe to the agent a "twofold evil will."

Aquinas presents a similar situation in the *Prima secundae* of the *ST*, and again it occurs in a discussion of the relation of external acts to interior ones. There Aquinas observes:

> When someone wills to do something for a good or evil end and desists because of some impediment, while another continues the movement of the will until it is completed in deed, it is manifest that the will of the latter is more lasting in good or evil, and according to this is better or worse.[43]

On these accounts, the successful fornicator is guilty of a more serious moral failure than the unsuccessful one. Why is this so? The above-cited text provides the clear answer: the will of successful fornicator persists longer than the will of the unsuccessful counterpart, presumably because

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[42] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 2, ad 8 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 34, ll. 229–235): "si aliquis uno motu uoluntatis uult peccare, et cum non habeat opportunitatem transit uoluntatis motus; in alio autem qui primo habet motum uoluntatis, postmodum opportunitatem habens, iteratur uoluntatis actus, et sic est in eo duplex mala uoluntas, una sine actu, et alia cum actu."

[43] *ST* I-II, q. 20, a. 4, c. (*Editio Leonina*, VI: 160): "cum aliquis uult facere aliquid bono fine uel malo, et propter aliquod impedimentum desistit; alius autem continuat motum voluntatis quousque opere perficiat; manifestum est quod huiusmodi voluntas est diuturnior in bono vel malo, et secundum hoc est peior vel melior."

it takes greater volitional activity to intend to fornicate and to fornicate than simply to intend to fornicate and be unsuccessful at fornicating.

In his direct reply to the case involving the unsuccessful and successful fornicators in *QDM*, q. 2, a. 2, ad 9, Aquinas invokes the authority of Augustine to defend the view that agents are not punished for what they would perform, but are punished for what they do perform. Aquinas contends that even though having or not having an opportunity to sin may fall entirely outside the sinner's control, to make use of an opportunity does, and for this reason "the sinner sins and his sin is increased."[44] Therefore, with regard to sinning, the intention is clearly not equal to the deed for Aquinas. Perhaps Aquinas's position could be profitably contrasted with the view, commonly attributed to Peter Abelard, that once an agent consents to sin the subsequent performance of the deed adds nothing to increase the sin.[45]

In sum, Aquinas's detailed analysis of the case of the successful and would-be fornicators thoughtfully raises the issue of moral luck, but there appears little in his subsequent analysis to suggest that Aquinas is an advocate of it. Initially, the case looked promising. After all, the mere opportunity to fornicate fell outside the control of the respective agents, and for the unsuccessful fornicator, the lack of opportunity was vital in limiting the extent of his sinful behavior (on the assumption that the will to fornicate remained constant). Even though mere opportunity played a crucial role in distinguishing the successful and would-be fornicators in that case, Aquinas's precisions rule out a role for accidental factors in establishing the moral responsibility of both agents. If Aquinas's analysis appears to offer little in support of present-day defenders of moral luck, it is precisely because Aquinas ultimately identifies a crucial difference in the respective wills of both agents: the successful adulterer's will persists through the commission of the act, whereas the will of the unsuccessful fornicator does not. Contemporary proponents of moral luck will therefore have to look elsewhere in the Thomistic corpus to discover an ally in Aquinas.

Moral luck case #2: evening activities and morning obligations

To find advocacy for moral luck in the writings of Aquinas, one could benefit from a scenario where the respective wills of two agents remain

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[44] *QDM*, q. 2. a. 2, ad 9 (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 35, l. 314): "peccat et peccatum eius augetur."
[45] See Peter Abelard, *Ethics*, I, in *Peter Abelard's 'Ethics,'* ed. and trans. D. E. Luscombe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 14, 18, 38.

identical in all respects, but differing degrees of sin or moral failure result because of entirely accidental factors. A scenario possibly satisfying these conditions is discussed twice in *QDM*, q. 2, a. 1. In a discussion of whether every sin involves an act, Aquinas begins by describing an agent who stays up too late and thereby is unable to attend matins the next morning:

> Someone is impeded and cannot rise for morning prayers because he stayed up too late the previous evening engrossed in something.[46]

Aquinas discusses such an agent in other works spanning the length of his writing career, and he specifies in one version that the previous night's engrossing activity is drunkenness, which, as noted above, falls under the sin of gluttony.[47] Collectively and individually, these texts describe an instance of a sin of omission, where an agent's evening activity renders the agent incapable of fulfilling an obligation the next morning. As part of his analysis, Aquinas inquires about the temporality of such a sin of omission: when, exactly, does the sin occur? There appear to be two competing answers. One might say that the sin of omission occurs during the previous evening, when the agent stays up too late or drinks too much in a way that is incompatible with fulfilling the impending morning obligation. Alternately, one might say that the sin of omission occurs the next morning, at the very time of the missed obligation. In the most detailed version of the example, appearing in the *Secunda secundae* of the *ST*, Aquinas appears to favor the second interpretation. He explains:

> If this incapacity is due to some prior fault of his, such as the case where a man has become drunk in the evening and is incapable of rising for matins as he ought to, some say that the sin of omission begins at the time when one engages in the act that is illicit and incompatible with that act to which he is bound. But this does not appear to be true, because, supposing that he were to be roused by violence and went to matins, he would not omit to go. Accordingly, it is clear that the preceding drunkenness was not an omission but a cause of the omission. Therefore, it should be said that the omission begins to be imputed to him as a sin when the time comes for the action […].[48]

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[46] *QDM*, q. 2, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 29, ll. 150–151): "aliquis impeditur ne surgat ad matutinas quia nimis uigilauit in sero circa aliquid se occupando." See also: "Someone getting to sleep too late because of being engrossed in something is impeded from getting up at the hour of morning prayers," *QDM*, q. 2, a. 1, c. (*Editio Leonina*, XXIII: 30, ll. 269–271): "qui nimia occupatione tarde incipiendo dormire impediuit se ne surgeret matutinarum hora."

[47] *In Sent* II, d. 35, q. 1, a. 3, c.; *ST* I-II, q. 71, a. 5, c., *ST* II–II, q. 79, a. 3, ad 3.

[48] *ST* II-II, q. 79, a. 3, ad 3 (*Editio Leonina*, IX: 171): "Si vero [impotens] sit propter eius culpam praecedentem, puta cum aliquis de sero se inebriavit et non potest surgere ad matutinas ut debet: dicunt quidam quod tunc incoepit peccatum omissionis quando aliquis applicat se ad actum illicitum et

Aquinas argues that one cannot attribute the sin of omission to the agent
on the previous evening because some extrinsic factor may later allow the
agent to fulfill the morning obligation. In this example, the extrinsic fac-
tor happens to be another person, ready with violence, who secures the
agent's fulfillment of the obligation. Aquinas's terminology *per violentiam*
underscores that the agent is unable to fulfill the morning obligation by
his efforts alone; this extrinsic assistance allows the agent to avoid com-
mitting a sin of omission.

The manner of the agent's avoidance of a sin of omission in this
case raises the issue of moral luck. Only with the morning appearance
of another person, ready with violence, to assist the agent in fulfilling
the obligation, does the agent avoid being guilty of a moral failure. The
example prompts a consideration of the extent to which success and
failure in the moral life is tethered to purely accidental or extrinsic fac-
tors. Present-day exponents of moral luck find the dependency of the
moral life on accidental factors to be a neglected issue in the tradition
of theorizing about ethics. In Aquinas's example, the extrinsic charac-
ter of the assistance rendered to the agent in fulfillment of the morning
obligation is clear; one can assume that the morning visitation of vio-
lence on the agent was entirely unforeseen by the agent the night before.
Furthermore, one can imagine that only later the next day, after the ful-
fillment of the morning obligation, when the aftereffects of sleep depriv-
ation or excessive drinking have subsided, does the agent fully evaluate
what has occurred. Indeed, the agent may consider himself to have been
quite *lucky* to have fulfilled the morning obligation. To be sure, it is not
difficult to imagine that the agent's own assessment of the visitation with
violence may have evolved from displeasure to gratitude, when upon
reflection, the agent recognizes that the unexpected violence was neces-
sary for the fulfillment of the morning obligation given the previous
night's late hours or drunkenness.

To highlight further the role of luck in Aquinas's example, and to
bring the example more clearly in line with the conditions of moral luck
stated above, one might imagine that the agent was not alone in staying
up too late or drinking excessively the night before, but had an accom-
plice. In this expanded scenario, the original agent and the accomplice

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incompossibilem cum illo actu ad quem tenetur. Sed hoc non videtur verum. Quia, dato quod
excitaretur per violentiam et iret ad matutinas, non omitteret. Unde patet quod praecedens inebria-
tio non fuit omissio, sed omissionis causa. Unde dicendum est quod omissio incipit ei imputari ad
culpam quando fuit tempus operandi."

have identical wills, they perform the same evening activities, and they possess the same morning obligation. The only difference is that when the morning arrives, violence is visited on the original agent and not the accomplice, so that of the two only the original agent fulfills the morning obligation. In the absence of such extrinsic help, the accomplice alone is guilty of the sin of omission. Later the accomplice may consider the original agent to have been lucky given the unforeseen extrinsic help that he himself did not enjoy. Furthermore, the accomplice may be envious over not having been similarly assisted in keeping the morning obligation. Still further, the accomplice may judge that the morning's episode is simply one instance out of many in which the absence of extrinsic factors (which seem so plentiful in the lives of others but lacking in his own), has rendered his moral progress so much harder than others. The accomplice wonders why, when having a will that is identical in all respects to his counterpart, he alone is guilty of the greater moral failure, simply due to unforeseen factors outside of his control. If the accomplice's analysis is correct, then moral luck appears to play some role in the moral life.

Conclusion

Prior to attributing a full-fledged view of moral luck to Aquinas, however, two qualifications may restrict any general conclusions. First, a comprehensive approach to Aquinas's writings – one that does not simply select examples but accounts for the whole of the Thomistic philosophical and theological approach – may find any discussion of luck in the moral life to be ruled out because of Aquinas's detailed remarks on divine providence. On this interpretation, what seems to be accidental or lucky in the moral life may only appear to be such from a limited, human perspective. Aquinas's developed views on providence have both philosophical and theological dimensions, and arguably much falls on the theological side of his theorizing.[49] Secondly, both cases involving luck examined above – that of the successful and would-be fornicators, and that of the agent who stays up too late or drinks too much – arguably presuppose some prior acts of wrongdoing on the part of each agent. An agent who adopts an intention to fornicate, as well as an agent who knowingly engages in

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[49] See, however, Brian J. Shanley, "Thomas Aquinas on Demonstrating God's Providence," in *The Science of Being as Being: Metaphysical Investigations*, ed. Gregory T. Doolan (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 221–242.

unnecessary activities incompatible with future obligations, could each be said to have committed prior wrongs on Aquinas's view. Does Aquinas's approach to moral luck presuppose that agents commit prior wrongs?[50] If so, this feature may also restrict the attribution of about a robust view of moral luck to Aquinas's philosophical ethics.

[50] In other contexts, Aquinas argues that unaddressed past moral failures can render the fulfillment of future obligations impossible; see M. V. Dougherty, *Moral Dilemmas in Medieval Thought: From Gratian to Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 112–146.

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Index

Thomas Aquinas's *Disputed Questions on Evil* is a careful and detailed analysis of the general topic of evil, including discussions on evil as privation, human free choice, the cause of moral evil, moral failure, and the so-called seven deadly sins. This collection of ten specially commissioned new essays, the first book-length English-language study of *Disputed Questions on Evil*, examines the most interesting and philosophically relevant aspects of Aquinas's work, highlighting what is distinctive about it and situating it in relation not only to Aquinas's other works, but also to contemporary philosophical debates in metaphysics, ethics, and philosophy of action. The essays also explore the history of the work's interpretation. The volume will be of interest to researchers in a broad range of philosophical disciplines including medieval philosophy and history of philosophy, as well as to theologians.

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